

Taliban recapture Bamiyan

KABUL (AFP) - The Taliban militia Sunday recaptured the central Afghan city of Bamiyan from the opposition northern alliance, Taliban Information Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi said.

'Bamiyan was recaptured today after the operation began from two sides, to the north and south of the city,' he told AFP.

The hardline Islamic militia had lost the city to the Hezb-i-Wahdat faction of the anti-Taliban northern alliance amid a reported uprising on April 21.

Bamiyan, a stronghold of mainly Shia Muslims, was earlier seized by the Taliban militia in September last year.

Muttaqi said the militia troops entered Bamiyan from the north 'as a result of a coordinated attack by the Taliban soldiers and local people of Saighan and Khamard.'

He said the Taliban also captured Haji Gak pass in the southern flank.

The attack was mounted early Sunday at 4 am, he said, adding 'resistance was very minimal.'

'The enemy soldiers are only in Yakwlang,' a town located 50 kilometers west of Bamiyan, Muttaqi said.

An official of the Hezb-i-Wahdat faction said 'we have no report.'

'Maybe it is wrong.'

However, he said there was fighting on the western side of the city.

The Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press later said dozens of Wahdat soldiers were killed in the fighting, while at least 50 people had been taken prisoner.

The state of 'lawlessness prevailing in Bamiyan for the past many days has come to an end,' a Taliban official was quoted as telling the private news service.

Bamiyan, famous for the world's largest Buddhist statues, is considered the main centre of the ethnic Hazara community opposed to the Taliban.

The militia earlier said heavy fighting was continuing in northern Kunduz province and around the strategically important Salang Tunnel.

'An offensive from Bangi (Kunduz) was repulsed. Some of the enemy personnel including commanders were killed or captured,' the militia said in an official Radio Shariat broadcast.

The statement followed claims by the opposition alliance that it had captured Dawre Khanabad and a power plant at Band-i-Barq in the same province.

Khanabad is a district which links Kunduz to Takhar and the provincial capital of Taloqan, where the alliance holds an extensive support network.

Independent sources have confirmed heavy Taliban aerial bombardments in the area.

Taliban regain control of Bamiyan

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The Taliban had lost the city to the pro-Iranian Hezb-i-Wahdat faction of the anti-Taliban northern alliance amid a reported uprising on April 21.

Bamiyan, a stronghold of the Shia community, was earlier seized by the Taliban in September last year. Muttaqi said the militia troops entered Bamiyan from the north 'as a result of a coordinated attack by the Taliban soldiers and local people of Saighan and Khamard.' He said the Taliban also captured Haji Gak Pass in the southern flank. The attack was mounted early Sunday at 4:00 am, he said, adding 'resistance was very minimal'.

'The enemy soldiers are only in Yakwlang,' a town located 50 kilometers west of Bamiyan, Muttaqi said.

Independent confirmation of the Taliban claim was not immediately available. An official of the Hezb-i-Wahdat faction said 'we have no report'. 'May be it is wrong.' However, he said there was fighting on the western side of the city.

The Afghan Islamic Press later said dozens of Wahdat soldiers were killed in the fighting, while at least 50 had been taken prisoner. The state of 'lawlessness prevailing in Bamiyan for the past many days has come to an end,' a Taliban official was quoted as telling the private news service.

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Independent sources have confirmed heavy Taliban aerial bombardments in the area. The Radio Shariat broadcast made no mention of a Taliban counter offensive at Bamiyan. It said Taliban troops had clashed with the alliance north of the Salang Tunnel, a vital supply route through the Hindu Kush mountain range, linking north and south Afghanistan.

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NATION

10 MAY 1999

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The Taliban control about 75 percent of Afghanistan, including the capital, Kabul.

Fighting around Bamiyan continues

KABUL (AFP) - Afghanistan's warring sides kept up fighting in the mountains of Hazarajat on Monday as independent sources confirmed the ruling Taliban had recaptured Bamiyan city.

One western source said the militia had entered the central Afghan city around noon Sunday and forced the Hezb-i-Wahdat faction of the Northern Alliance to retreat into the surrounding mountains.

"The Taliban control the city," he told AFP.

A Taliban victory at Bamiyan, in the heartland of the ethnic Hazaras, defied most expectations after Hezb-i-Wahdat troops pushed the militia out of the city on April 21.

"Most people expected the Hezb-i-Wahdat to hold Bamiyan. After all it's their home town but the Taliban are back in there and the situation has completely changed again," the western sources said.

Until April 21 the Taliban had maintained an eight-month occupation of Bamiyan, which was aided by some local commanders who sided with the Taliban and then switched back to the alliance in late March.

The alliance has said little about Bamiyan but spokesman Abdullah (eds: one name) told AFP heavy fighting continued Monday morn-

ing in the mountains around the city.

He said the situation in Bamiyan remained unchanged since Sunday afternoon and added: "There has been no counter offensive but there are clashes in the mountains".

Outside the central provinces, recent fighting has been focussed in the northern province of Kunduz and around the strategically important Salang tunnel, that links north and south Afghanistan.

Both sides have claimed gains.

The Taliban say they have held Bangi in Kunduz while the alliance claims to have secured districts around Khanabad which links Kunduz to Takhar province, where the alliance hold an extensive support network.

Independent sources have confirmed heavy Taliban aerial bombardments in the area, particularly in Taloqan the provincial capital of Takhar.

Air traffic at Kabul airport has been heavy.

No mention was made on the official broadcaster Radio Shariat when the city fell to the Hezb-i-Wahdat or when it was re-taken almost three weeks later. But Taliban Information Minister Mulla Amir Khan Muttaqi said Sunday that Bamiyan was recaptured in a two-pronged operation from the north and south of the city.

Afghan opposition shoots down Taliban plane

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - A senior military commander of the Afghan opposition Thursday claimed that the alliance forces had shot down a Taliban plane near the central city of Bamiyan.

"In a major blow to the Taliban forces, alliance anti-aircraft units were successful in shooting down a Taliban cargo plane in the vicinity of Bamiyan city," General Sayed Husain Anwari, Chief Military Commander, Harrakat-i-Islami said.

General Anwari told this agency from the northern province of Kunduz that more than 30 Taliban soldiers were killed in the battles and 20 were captured, currently held as POWs in Bamiyan.

He said on late Tuesday afternoon, the alliance forces foiled a major Taliban offensive to the south of the city, in Haidarabad, adjacent to Bamiyan Airport, to inflicting heavy loss on the rivals.

The general said that troops loyal to the alliance had successfully repulsed a major Taliban offensive in Chapchal, Samangan, border with Balkh.

Reports from alliance field commanders have confirmed that six Taliban soldiers were killed in this offensive while two have been made POWs. Additionally, the alliance troops have captured a number of military vehicles (including a Kamaz truck), rocket launchers and a substantial amount of ammunition.

Taliban attack Masood's forces in Laghman

ISLAMABAD, May 14: Several people were killed in a fresh outbreak of fighting between Taliban and forces loyal to opposition commander Ahmed Shah Masood in northern Laghman province, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) agency reported on Friday.

The Taliban mounted a counter-offensive on Friday morning against an overnight attack by Masood in the province's Daulatshah area, the AIP said.

It said two Taliban fighters were killed while the opposition lost several soldiers.

The Peshawar-based private news service said fighting was continuing in Laghman as the Taliban sent in fresh fighters from Jalalabad.

Renewed fighting in northern and central Afghanistan has broken out in recent weeks, with the ruling militia retaking Bamiyan province and the city of the same name from the Hezb-i-Wahdat.

The AIP said Yakawlang district of the province was still under the control of the opposition.—dpa

Afghan opposition claims control over Bamiyan airport

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Afghan Opposition on Tuesday rejected the Taliban claim that they have taken full control of the central Bamiyan province and said the Opposition forces still control the south of Bamiyan city, including the Airport, an Opposition Commander said on Tuesday.

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16 MAY 1999

Villagers flee as Taliban take over Yakoulang

KABUL: Villages throughout central Bamiyan province were deserted as the Taliban troops swept through the area recapturing territory from the northern-based opposition alliance, eyewitnesses said Saturday.

On Saturday the Taliban said they captured the strategic Yakoulang area, some 60 kilometres west of the provincial capital of Bamiyan. By the time the Taliban fought their way into Yakoulang it was completely deserted, they said. A few days earlier when they took the provincial capital they said it too was like a ghost town. Taliban soldiers in the area accused the opposition Hezb-e-Wahdat of order-

ing villagers out of the area and sending them into hiding in the mountains.

According to an opposition spokesman Abdullah, there were reports of heavy fighting in Yakoulang area, but he didn't know whether the Taliban had taken the area. Bamiyan, which is famous because of the world's tallest standing statue of Bhuddha located there, has been a fiercely fought over region. The Taliban lost the area to the opposition last month, but then retook it in recent days. For the opposition it is a strategic area because it is one of the few regions in Afghanistan that is dominated by the country's

minority Shia Muslims, who belong to the opposition alliance.

Taliban soldiers at the frontline near Bamiyan said they are preparing for a heavy counter offensive by the opposition. They said they didn't know whether people fled to the hills because they were afraid of advancing Taliban or whether the opposition forced them out of their homes and were preparing to use them in counter offensive.

Attempts by the United Nations to broker a peace agreement in Afghanistan have largely failed. Neither side appears ready to make any major concession toward peace with both sides heavily armed. —AP

No atrocities committed by Taliban in Bamiyan, claims eyewitness

PESHAWAR (NNI) - Taliban have committed no atrocities in the Bamiyan after they re-took this central Afghan town on May 9, said a journalist working for a London-based television network on his return from Bamiyan on Thursday.

Kamal Hyder, Pakistan-based Coordinator of the Independent Television News London told NNI that just days after the Taliban Takeover of Bamiyan he visited the city and at no point was he prevented from seeing or investigating any evidence of any atrocities of excesses committed by the Taliban.

"I travelled by road to Bamiyan and all along the way I saw normal activities. People went about their daily chores," Hyder said. He said that there is not iota of truth of some Afghan news agencies based in Pakistan and opposition sources

in Afghanistan reports that the Taliban had conducted massive human rights violations.

He confirmed that Bamiyan city was vacated by the opposition hours before the Taliban recaptured that city, however, there was no evidence to suggest that over 200 houses had been burnt. "Anyone who has been Bamiyan city will tell you that the entire city does not have half the number of houses in the city," he said. All road traffic from Mazaar to Kabul plied an usual without any fear while nomadic tribes too continued to use this route. He said that during his visit to Bamiyan, which involved driving at night through an area notorious for banditry, he did not find any atrocities committed by the Taliban. "On the contrary, I found the bazaars of all the small towns from Haji Gak Pass to Bamiyan

city functioning normally and people went about their daily chores," the journalist said.

Hyder said the Taliban have restored law and order in an area infamous for ruthless barbarism against travellers and nomadic kuchi tribes. "The object of my travel at night on my return journey from Bamiyan city to Maidaan sheher was to prove that the province is under control and completely safe for travellers," he added. He said Bamiyan city gave a deserted look, primarily because of the fear of reprisals by the Taliban that the local promotion of this city left before the Taliban entered the city. "The Taliban contrary, to expectations, would not conduct any massacre that would isolate them further. Rumours to this effect only spread hatred and creates stereo-typing the Taliban as the ruthless force".

FRONTIER POST 21 MAY 1999

Iranian-backed plot to attack Herat foiled, claim Taliban

ISLAMABAD: Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia said Friday it had crushed an Iranian-backed plot to create turmoil in its western stronghold of Herat, killing eight opponents and arresting 100 others.

Other sources said a clampdown had left dozens more dead. But an Afghan Shiite party, the Harakat-e-Islami, accused the Taliban of carrying out a "systematic purge" of Herat's Shia Muslims, killing 25 and injuring 75 others after sealing the border with Iran on Wednesday.

Taliban Information Minister Mulla Amir Khan Muttaqi spoke of the alleged plot to the Pakistani-based information agency, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP).

"We knew about the Iran-supported conspiracy in advance and suppressed it successfully," AIP quoted Muttaqi as saying.

The bodies of several of those killed were hung up in the city of Herat as a warning, Muttaqi told AIP.

The Taliban captured Herat province, which borders Iran, in August 1996 shortly before they overran the Afghan capital.

Muttaqi said the Taliban struck while arms were being distributed in the suburbs of Herat city to prepare for a raid on key installations this week.

Eight "conspirators" were killed and 100 arrested in the attack launched on Tuesday and 130 weapons seized, he said.

AIP, quoting other unidentified sources, said the Taliban had launched a clean-up operation in Herat following the attack, searching homes and rounding up suspects.

It said five Taliban soldiers and some 50 other people were killed in clashes during the search and 200 people had been arrested over the past two days. The news service said the plotters planned to attack the Governor's House in Herat and other key installations, including the police headquarters and an army base.

Harakat-e-Islami Commander General Sayed Hussain Anwari, in a statement sent here from inside Afghanistan, said many people had been arrested in Herat and transported to unknown destinations.

"House-to-house searches are

continuing in Herat," Anwari said, adding 25 Shias had been killed and 75 injured in the city so far. The Harakat commander said the Taliban had "heavily mined" the border with Iran.

Muttaqi renewed allegations of Iranian interference in Afghanistan, saying "the conspiracy to create unrest in Herat was backed by them."

"Iran should stop interference and try to promote a relationship of mutual trust and respect with the Taliban," he said.

Early last week the Taliban accused Iran of militarily intruding into western Afghan provinces and lodged a protest.

The protest note, handed to Iranian diplomats in Pakistan, alleged that Iranian troops intruded into Farah and Herat provinces on Thursday and carried out operations against civilians.

There was no independent confirmation of the Taliban claim and Iran denied it as "baseless."

An Interior Ministry official in Tehran said Iranian forces were stationed in the eastern regions of the country and they "only intervene to pursue and arrest bandits and drug-traffickers infiltrating into Iranian territory."

Meanwhile, Afghanistan's Northern Alliance on Friday staged new rocket strikes on Kabul as Amnesty International announced it was investigating an alleged massacre.

Residents said another three rockets were fired on the Afghan capital on Friday morning, from positions held by the alliance to the north of Kabul.

There were no immediate reports of casualties.

About 20 rockets have struck Kabul since early Thursday, killing at least one person and leaving several injured. Most of the missiles, understood to be Russian-made BM-21s, landed near Kabul Airport from where the alliance says the ruling Taliban has been launching aerial bombardments across northern Afghanistan.

Amnesty International said, meanwhile, it was investigating claims by the alliance that "hundreds of civilian families" were massacred in the central Afghan city of Bamiyan.—AFP

Taliban launch attack to recapture key valley

KABUL (AFP) - Afghanistan's Taliban militia Saturday launched an attack to eject supporters of the rival Northern Alliance from the strategic valley of Dara Soof in the northern province of Samangan, the opposition said.

General Sayed Hussain Anwari, a senior opposition commander, said the alliance supporters repulsed the attack which was backed by heavy artillery and aerial bombardment.

"Although fighting continues in the valley, enemy troops have failed to advance towards the alliance strongholds," Anwari told AFP by satellite telephone from inside Afghanistan.

Parts of the long and narrow valley, which sits on an alternative highway linking the Taliban-held Bamiyan with their northern stronghold of Mazar-i-Sharif, have changed hands several times in the past month.

A Taliban comment or an independent confirmation of the opposition claim was not immediately available.

The Taliban recaptured Bamiyan in central Afghanistan on May 9 about three weeks after they lost it to the opposition troops.

The capture of Bamiyan has not reopened the Taliban northern supply route which goes through central regions to the north through Dara Shekari valley, according to travellers.

Travellers said Bamiyan city was tense and almost empty of its ethnic Hazara residents.

Anwari said Northern Alliance soldiers Saturday attacked the Taliban positions in Hash Lez and Chahar Nau-rak districts of Samangan.

The Taliban control about 80 per cent of Afghanistan and are fighting the alliance groups headed by ex-defence minister Ahmad Shah Masood. The ruling militia has recently heightened pressure on Masood by bombarding his bases in the northern province of Parwan.

NATION

23 MAY 1999

Taliban foils bid to capture Herat

Opposition claims Shiites massacre

By AIMAL KHAN

PESHAWAR - Afghanistan's Taliban rulers Friday claimed that they had foiled an Iran-backed plot to capture the strategic Herat city and had killed 50 opposition infiltrators besides rounding up hundreds others during an operation.

"Eight of the opposition members were publicly hanged in Herat on Tuesday last," Afghan sources revealed here, saying that the operation was carried out a few days back.

The sources quoted senior Taliban officials as claiming that the student militia had received reports from its intelligence apparatus that the opposition was distributing Iran-made arms and money among its supporters and sympathisers through scores of its agents who had infiltrated into the strategic city, which is located close to the countries border with Iran.

"The money and weapons were supplied by Iran to enable the opposition capture the city or create conditions conducive for an Iranian invasion of Afghanistan,"

the sources quoted the Taliban officials as claiming.

Subsequently, the sources added, the hardline student militia launched an operation in the city to pre-empt the opposition's move and in the process flushed out all the opposition infiltrators. Fifty opposition agents were killed and more than 200 were arrested during the operation during which the militia also lost five of its fighters, added the Afghan sources.

NNI adds: The Afghan opposition alliance Friday accused the Taliban of launching ethnic cleansing of Shiites in the western province of Herat.

"Reports from alliance commanders in Herat have confirmed accounts that the occupying Taliban militia has commenced a systematic purge of Shiites in Herat City," General Sayed Husain Anvari, Chief Military Commander Harkat-i-Islami said.

General Anvari told this news agency from Kunduz that in a dramatic move, Taliban soldiers commenced attacking residential properties of prominent Shiite Heratis two days ago.

Fighting between Taliban, opposition continues near Bamiyan

KABUL: Taliban soldiers and their northern based opposition were waging a bitter battle Monday for a strategic crossroad in Central Afghanistan, opposition soldiers said.

Taliban jet fighters bombed opposition positions near Dar-e-Suf, a district that links Central Bamiyan province to Kabul some 200 kilometers away and to northern Afghanistan's Mazar-e-Sharif, said opposition spokesman Ustad Atta Mohammad.

The Taliban say they are in control of Dar-e-Suf, but opposition soldiers say fighting in the area is intense and they currently are holding about 80% of the district.

Last week, the Taliban retook the provincial capital of Bamiyan from their opponents, but fighting raged in several other areas of the province.

"In Dar-e-Suf the fighting still is very intense... The Taliban began their offensive last night," said Mohammad, who also is a senior commander of Masud's party. He was contacted by satellite telephone.

Several times Taliban jets that appeared to come from northern Afghanistan bombed opposition bases, said Mohammad.—AP

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FRONTIER POST

22 MAY 1999

19 MAY 1999

Taliban claim calm in Bamiyan province

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - Maulvi Najibullah, the Peshawar-based Afghan Consul General, has said there exists normal situation in Bamyan province of Afghanistan, and the Afghan Islamic Emirates in the light of its policies has restored etc complete peace and security in the region.

"There is no killing and plunder of offices, houses in the Bamyan province now which has again fallen to the Taliban", he remarked in a Press communiqué on Friday. Clarifying the factual position in Bamyan province of Afghanistan, the diplomat said Islamic Emirates with the collaboration of the people from that area has restored normal life. Similarly, he added.

The Afghan Consul General said that if any casualty had been reported it was during the fighting 'between the Opposition and the forces of Islamic Emirates.

He added that similarly when Bamyan was in the hands of the Opposition, the Opposition committed wide range of brutalities, not only on the Taliban but also the civilians. The Opposition has made the life of the civilians and Taliban, worse he remarked.

Maulvi Najibullah further said that soon after recapturing Bamyan, the Islamic forces had ensured peace and security of the people.

During the fighting, Taliban did their

best to ensure security to the civilians and their properties. He, however, alleged that those who are making such a baseless propaganda by issuing unconfirmed reports are known to each and every one. Such elements are playing in the hands of those who hatched conspiracies against the Islamic Emirate and their past is visible to everyone.

About the situation in Bamyan, the Afghan Consul General quoted a report of a Pakistani journalist which states "While Bamyan city gave a deserted look, it was primarily because of the fear of reprisals by the Taliban that the local population of this city left before the Taliban entered the city.

The Taliban contrary to expectations would not conduct any massacre that would isolate them further. Rumours to this effect only spread hatred and portray the Taliban a ruthless force."

Maulvi Najibullah said Taliban neither kill nor allow killing of innocent people, but unfortunately some vested interests involve Taliban in the outcome of their personal disputes, or for their own misdeeds.

He reaffirmed that Taliban are bound to follow the sacred norms of Islam which forbid killing and harming the innocent people. The Islamic govt of Afghanistan is determined to maintain a peaceful atmosphere in all over Afghanistan as well as to protect lives and properties of the civilians, he concluded.

Taliban say local people razed homes in Bamiyan

ISLAMABAD, May 25: The Taliban's chief, Mullah Mohammad Omar, on Tuesday said local groups in Bamiyan were responsible for razing homes during a battle for control of the central Afghan city.

Mulla Omar said people who had supported the opposition Northern Alliance had burnt the houses of local people who had supported the Taliban, after the militia was pushed out of the city on April 21.

Then after the Taliban recaptured the city on May 9, Taliban supporters exacted revenge and burnt the homes of Northern Alliance supporters, Omar told Radio Sharif.

The United Nations and Amnesty International are investigating claims by the opposition that at least 250 homes were torched and hundreds of families were massacred after the militia recaptured the city.

It was the first official comment from the Taliban on events at Bamiyan.

The fall of districts and towns to the west of Bamiyan province on March 9-12 forced troops aligned with the alliance to retreat into Koh-i-Baba and other alliance strongholds in the province," an alliance commander, General Sayed Husain Anwari, said.

"Taliban troops, on entering the city, opened fire on men, women and children on the streets and bazaars of Bamiyan city.

"Families, who had elected to remain indoors, were 'locked in' by the Taliban soldiers. Members of the invading militia then proceeded to set fire to Hazara dwellings. Most of the occupants of these homes were burnt alive."

The commander said indiscriminate killings continued for at least 48 hours and some people were gunned down before their homes were set ablaze.

"These scenes were repeated in neighbouring villages, including Bursoona to the south of Bamiyan city." —AFP

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DAWN

26 MAY 1999

Taliban make attempt to capture valley

KABUL, May 22: Taliban on Saturday launched an attack to eject supporters of the rival Northern Alliance from the strategic valley of Dare Soof in the northern province of Samangan, the opposition said.

General Sayed Husain Anwari, a senior opposition commander, said the alliance supporters repulsed the attack which was backed by heavy artillery and aerial bombardment.

"Although fighting continues in the valley, enemy troops have failed to advance towards the alliance strongholds," Anwari told AFP by satellite telephone from inside Afghanistan.

Parts of the long and narrow valley, which sits on an alternative highway linking the Taliban-held Bamiyan with their northern stronghold of Mazar-i-Sharif, have changed hands several times in the

past month.

A Taliban comment or an independent confirmation of the opposition claim was not immediately available.

The Taliban recaptured Bamiyan in central Afghanistan on May 9 about three weeks after they lost it to the opposition troops.

The capture of Bamiyan has not reopened the Taliban northern supply route which goes through central regions to the north through Dare Shekari valley, according to travellers.

Travellers said Bamiyan city was tense and almost empty of its ethnic Hazara residents.

PROBE DEMANDED: Afghanistan's opposition on Saturday again urged the United Nations to investigate alleged massacres of minority ethnic Hazaras following a bloody crackdown on dissent by the ruling Taliban. —AFP

DAWN 23 MAY 1999

The Afghan tragedy

Ahson Saeed Hasan

Even though the international community is aware of the situation in Afghanistan now, there is no end in sight for the "Afghan tragedy" and the suffering continues. The human rights situation in Afghanistan has been of consistent and grave concern to human rights organizations all over the world. For decades, observers such as Amnesty International (AI), Asia Watch, US State Department, keeping a close eye on the deteriorating human rights situation, have consistently expressed their concern about the abuses perpetrated by all sides in the conflict in Afghanistan.

In 1995, AI launched an international campaign titled, "Afghanistan - International responsibility for human rights disaster" to increase awareness and to bring attention to the continuing suffering of Afghan civilians. AI has also organized several events in the Washington DC area under the banner, "Afghanistan - World's largest forgotten tragedy".

Fortunately or unfortunately, only when the Taliban captured the capital Kabul in 1996, and decreed most severe restrictions on women, did the world at large take note of the suffering of ordinary Afghans. The present day tragedy can be traced back to December 1979, when Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan. Mujahideen groups responded by mounting armed opposition to the Soviet presence.

As Afghanistan plunged into civil war in the early 1980s, governments around the world lined up to offer political and military support to the various factions. The fact that some of these groups were terrorizing defenceless civilians was simply a lower concern than using them as Cold War proxies. Political expediency was often the priority, not human rights.

For over a decade vast quantities of arms and ammunitions were poured into Afghanistan that was riven by conflict. The states primarily responsible were the former Soviet Union (including its successor states of the Commonwealth of Independent States), the United States of America and its West European allies, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Iran. All either sold arms directly to Afghan groups; financed arms purchases or facilitated in distribution through their territory. Not once did any of them acknowledge that the arms were being used to commit human rights abuses on a mass scale.

Clearly Soviet and Soviet-backed forces were guilty of gross and systematic abuses. This is well known and was quite appropriately condemned. But it has been a little noted feature that some of the Western-backed Mujahideen were involved in human rights violations as well.

The Soviet Union's aim after its invasion of Afghanistan was to install pro-Soviet government. The USA's aim was to secure Soviet withdrawal. Countries neighbouring Afghanistan hoped to increase their influence in the region. The bulk of the human costs of these aims were not borne by these governments. They were borne by millions of defenceless women, men, and children in Afghanistan. More than 400,000 children were killed and thousands more died of other war-related reasons. Villages and homes were destroyed by rockets, mortars and bombs. Five million people - a third of the population - became refugees.

The abuses being inflicted by the Taliban is yet another chapter in the sad history of a civilian population, which has for nearly two decades remained hostage to the military ambitions of the warring factions with total disregard for the human rights of the Afghan people.

The Taliban emerged as a new military and political force in November 1994 when they captured the city of Kandahar from Mujahideen groups. In September 1996 Taliban forces entered Kabul. Among their first acts was to hang former President Najibullah, who since the fall of his Soviet-backed government in April 1992 had sought refuge in a UN compound. So far, only Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates have recognized the Taliban as a government, although relations between Saudi Arabia and the Taliban now appear to be strained. These countries have a special moral, political and social responsibility to address the ongoing human rights abuses committed by the Taliban.

As we all know, the Taliban have imposed strict edicts in the areas they control. These include :

- * Girls and women are banned from schools and universities.
- * Women are banned from employment.
- * Women are allowed in public

only in the company of a close male relative and wearing the all-enveloping *burqa* robe.

* Women defying Taliban edicts, including showing their ankles are beaten by Taliban guards.

* Access to health care has been severely restricted with serious consequences for women.

* Recently *Muharram* processions were also banned by Taliban. Violations of the human rights of women and girls are not unique to areas controlled by the Taliban. They have, however, been instituted in a systematic militarily enforced fashion by the Taliban that has been aptly called "gender apartheid".

Other Taliban offences include stoning people to death on accusation of adultery; carrying out amputation on accusation of theft; floggings and public executions, as well as massacres of civilians, especially Hazaras in the northern parts of the country over the past two years.

The International community, by bringing together all six neighbouring countries, the US and Russia (six plus two), is trying to bring some settlement to the Afghan conflict. That process drifted back and forth and is still limping along without any significant progress. While it did not produce any tangible results, it is felt that the process should continue to keep all the interested parties talking.

The latest "ground breaking" deal came when the Taliban and the Northern Alliance representatives met face to face in Ashkabad, Turkmenistan and nailed down a "power sharing agreement". Even though that agreement has all but collapsed, what is disturbing is that the issue of human rights, especially that of women's rights, was not part of their power sharing agreement. No one knows if the agreement will hold, but it is already clear that for the warring factions, "power" at any cost is far more important than giving fundamental rights to women.

Indeed, it appears that even those Afghans in the country or in Pakistan who campaign for an end to the war and the establishment of a broad based government, are now being targeted. These Afghans are elements of hope for the emergence of a future civil society in Afghanistan.

The Afghan...

stan. Over a dozen of them have been killed in Afghanistan or Pakistan. All concerned and interested in the stability of Afghanistan should ensure that the security of Afghans seeking peace is of paramount importance and that any form of attack against them should stop.

The people of Afghanistan have been suffering for the last twenty years, abused by all the warring factions. Human rights and the welfare of the people is the last thing in the minds of these factions. The United States has a long and very close relationship with the people of Afghanistan. It is time for the United States, being an influential force in the region and the sole global power, to take a leading role in helping the civilians of Afghanistan to live in peace.

In order to make sure that peace is established in Afghanistan, given the existing circumstances, the United States can lend a helping hand in the following manner:

* President Clinton should appoint a Special Envoy to Afghanistan, similar to that of Northern Ireland, to help bring an end to the suffering of the Afghan civilians.

* The administration should demand that all prisoners of conscience be released by all factions. As a first step, all the factions should give the names of their prisoners, including their place of detention and access to these prisons by international human rights/humanitarian organizations.

* The US government should give a clear message to the government of the Taliban and to the other armed groups, that the administration will not tolerate the killing and harassment of Afghan moderates who are seeking peace.

* The US government should ensure that oil companies competing for contracts in Afghanistan do not ignore the human rights situation there. These companies should make public their position with regard to the human rights situation, especially regarding the treatment of women in Afghanistan.

The situation in Afghanistan is truly a human tragedy. How much longer will this deliberate human catastrophe continue? When will the international community decide that enough is enough, that Afghan civilians have a right to live in an environment that allows them to enjoy their human rights with dignity and with respect?

NATION

05 MAY 1999

Iran's latest moves on Afghanistan

Uzbek President Islam Karimov and Iranian foreign minister Kharazzi have agreed on joint efforts to achieve peace in Afghanistan. Their countries have also said that they seek a peaceful solution to the conflict through the UN Security Council. Even if the entire Afghanistan falls to the Taliban, Iran and Uzbekistan say they will try to find a solution through the UN. The Iranian foreign minister has just wrapped up a visit to Uzbekistan, where he achieved a greater understanding over Afghanistan with his hosts. Iran opposes the Taliban and it has preached regional cooperation, especially involving Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, for solving the Afghan crisis. Iran is now seeking more and more support for its standpoint on Afghanistan. On the other hand, the northern opposition alliance led by Ahmad Shah Masood is scoring some significant battleground victories. On Thursday, for instance, it occupied the Kunduz province bordering Tajikistan. Last week, we saw it consolidating its hold on areas around Bamyan. The fresh spurt of fighting in Afghanistan indicates that the northern forces, supported by Iran, are now better equipped and their morale has registered a new high. The observers of the Afghan scene believe that the latest battleground victories by the northern forces could not have come without massive logistic support from the Iran-Central Asian combine. It also means that the support for Taliban has dwindled considerably in recent months. The militia still controls 60 percent of the country. However, it faces all sorts of challenges from the areas under its control. The fact that the militia is not willing to share power with its adversaries in the north is creating more problems for the Afghan people.

Unless the Taliban start thinking in terms of sharing power, the fighting in Afghanistan would not taper off. Indeed, we expect it to intensify as the summer settles in the country. Meanwhile, the UN Contact Group on Afghanistan (consisting of Russia and America with six countries bordering Afghanistan) is expected to meet in a couple of days. The Taliban are obviously not keen on this meeting, for they abhor all notions of power-sharing. It is up to the international community to decide on ways to pressure the militia to make it talk peace with its opponents in Afghanistan. Pakistan still has enormous influence over the Taliban; but it is not inclined to see their writ reduced. Iran is not keen to talk to Pakistan either. That is why it is focusing mainly on the Central Asian countries for the realisation of its objectives in Afghanistan. This is likely to lead to more tension between what were until recently two fraternal nations.

FRONTIER POST

08 MAY 1999

With the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan in 1989 it was hoped a durable peace will come to Afghanistan; consequently rehabilitation of Afghan refugees and the reconstruction of this war-torn country would take place. Instead of peace, the war for power was escalated by different *mujahideen* groups. Each of them wanted lion's share and they raided the opponents positions and men. This hopeless scenario and infighting among these groups allowed the Communist government of DR Nurjullah to survive till 1992 even without the support of Soviet forces. In 1992 when Nurjib tried to replace an Uzbek General with a Pashtoon the Uzbek warlord General Dostum pulled his support, bringing an end to Nurjib's government. Right from 1992 to 1994 and then to 1996 and till the present day one can see a lot of things have changed. In 1992 the Afghan *mujahideen* groups formed an interim government headed by Sibghatullah Mujaddadi. It was replaced by Professor Rabbani, only for four months. Neither the government of Mujaddadi nor of Rabbani succeeded in bringing an end to the differences

ravaged country if logistic and military support is cut off by the external players of the Afghan game. Definitely peaceful Afghanistan is in the interest of all the regional states. Allama Iqbal has rightly said "Afghanistan is the heart of Asia and if the heart (Afghanistan) is disturbed the whole Asia will be disturbed". No Afghan wants the division of Afghanistan. They all want a united Afghanistan where they could live with respect and honour.

The immediate neighbours and the United Nations must come forward for the solution of the Afghan crisis as the UN is a world body having the confidence of international community. The countries supporting their respective groups in must Afghanistan exercise their influence to bring them to the negotiating table. The recent visits of Pakistan Prime Minister to Moscow and the visiting Chairman of the Russian Duma, Gennady Nikolaevich Seleznev, to Islamabad where they discussed the Afghan issue and agreed that peace must prevail in Afghanistan is a positive development towards a peaceful settlement of the Afghan crisis.

- Akbar Rahman

Hope for peace in Afghanistan

among the *mujahideen* commanders. Till the emergence of Taliban in 1994, there was no central authority to exercise. Every commander was running the affairs of his area according to his own wishes. The whole Afghan nation was at the mercy of local warlords who were free to exercise their power to mint money and levy taxes on their subjects through their private militia. The people of Afghanistan were experiencing a very pathetic situation at the hands of these commanders. They had no hope for the betterment and any positive change in their lives.

But in 1994, a local cleric Mulla Mohammad Omar along with his ten to fifteen colleagues from Kandhar stood against the Asmat militia. They overcame the militia personnel and thus a new movement in the history of Afghanistan was launched in the name of Taliban movement. People welcomed the new outfit and offered every possible help wherever they went. This movement changed the whole

scenario of Afghanistan. The old player of the Afghan game like Gulbadin Hikmatyar, Massood and Dostum realised that their time for making decisions has passed. This was the fear of the Taliban which compelled the old rivals, Massood-Rabbani and Hikmatyar to cooperate with each other to safeguard their own interests. It did not materialise as the Taliban within a short span of time captured the capital city of Kabul in September 1996. The Rabbani government was toppled and the dethroned ruling elite took refuge in northern parts of Afghanistan. For the first time since 1979 till to date, 90 per cent of the Afghan area is under Taliban. Remaining 10 per cent area is the centre of so many big gun of the past and cronies of Ahmad Shah Masood at present. The law and order situation in this 10 per cent area is very pathetic.

The Northern Alliance is an alliance which is composed of different commanders and leaders who has been hostile to each other. They still have

their reservations against each other. The mistrust and differences between the Taliban and Northern Alliance is the absence of an authoritative personality in the ranks of Northern Alliance is the main reason for the continuation of bloodshed and destruction in Afghanistan. Both the sides cannot trust each other as we have seen in the past when the Taliban were massacred by Uzbeks and Hazaras in Mazar-e-Sharif. Although they were invited by General Malik, an opponent of General Dostum.

If we look at the Afghan history regarding negotiated settlement to the Afghan problem it has been very tragic. All the efforts which were made for a peaceful solution is a failure, either it is Peshawar Accord, Taif or Islamabad. The recent negotiations between the Northern Alliance and the Taliban in Ashgabat Turkmenistan, for a peaceful settlement of the crisis proved futile when the fight broke out immediately. The peace could come to the war-

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The Afghan society has been and is being ruled by the centuries old traditions. The aristocratic, pastoral, patriarchal, tribal and feudal mode of production and social relations leave no room for new ideas and thoughts to penetrate easily. Despite being at the crossroads of civilisations and pathway of various caravans of trade from India, China to Central Asia and vice versa, it has changed very little during the last two centuries. Geography and terrain has contributed to the general backwardness of the land.

The 'Great Game' played between Imperial Russia and Imperial Britain in this region has also had a negative bearing, arresting its natural growth towards modernisation over the 19th and beginning of 20th centuries. Its buffer position almost kept it to its own devices forbidding the winds of change to sweep over the country unlike the rest of the world.

Afghanistan has created great personalities; emperors, kings and geniuses in history. They established empires outside the boundaries of their land in the not very distant past. At home Ahmad Shah Abdali succeeded in establishing modern Afghanistan and extended it to the borders of Delhi in India. But sadly enough his power coincided with the rise of British rule towards north in India, which later on annexed a major part of his country into the imperialist 'golden sparrow'. Towards the north of Afghanistan the expansion of Russian Empire also helped in creating a besieged mentality among Afghans. Sandwiched between the two powers, they dexterously guarded their limited freedom from encroachment of either side. The Cold War also negatively affected and impeded the development of the country. Time seems frozen over the mountainous landscape of Afghanistan. This has moulded Afghan character, which is very difficult for an outsider to understand.

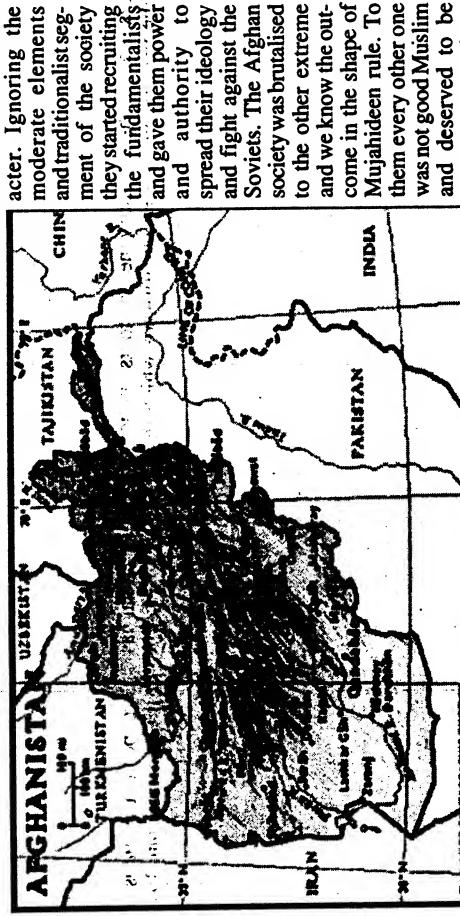
The Afghan character

Traditions have created and kept Afghanistan together, and have provided it with the necessary sustenance, says J. K. SUFI

derstand. Traditions and conventions bind an Afghan. He is history-conscious and the modern world changes have limited relevance to him. He accepts nothing new. But once he accepts it, he sticks to it in thick and thin. He is dogmatic and accepts no flexibility in the convictions he upholds.

Whenever, a tussle took place between modernity and conservatism, between politics and religion, the latter overpowered the former. King Amanullah Khan tried to modernise and he desperately failed giving place to extreme reaction. The so-called April 1978 Revolution quite did the same in a different setting and the results are obvious.

To my mind, Russians did play indirect role in bringing the April Revolution. However, they were forced to enter Afghanistan by the Afghan character which they did not understand at the beginning and the West used it to its advantage. Those who were witness to the Saur Revolution and the party that seized power thereafter would agree that the ideology that prompted them to act was disfigured to the extreme in their hands. Once they owned it and became the rulers, then Khalqis (ruling faction of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan) knew nothing.



Arabia - the ideological centre of the Sunnis. One can foresee that with the passage of time Taliban may create more problems than solve any. Now to the other extreme. Khalqis had swung it to the extreme left. It needs to be brought back to the middle. No ideology and persuasion can do it. Solution has to be sought within the traditions and customs of the Afghans. Traditions of Afghans are much more liberal. Religion and customs are blended together. Neither *mufti* nor layman can defy them. Every issue is referred to traditions and *jirgas* and after democratic deliberations, decisions are taken collectively and implemented Islam provides the veneer. Traditions have created and kept Afghanistan, and have provided it with the necessary sustenance. Any deviation from those traditions have resulted in turmoil and anarchy enveloping even the neighbours. Liberalism and conservatism, politics and Islam, democracy and monarchy, new and old go hand in hand without creating any friction. It is only ideology given in their hands that turn them into fanatics and in-fighters.

Pakistan must learn from history of

Afghanistan and never impose its pre-

planned solution on the land, which

would prove counter-productive. It

should help Afghans to revive their

traditions (their institutions) and put all

weight behind them. It should shun the

habit of seeking favourites, which

would serve a temporary purpose, but

may offer no permanent solution. The

Mujahideen rule has been a glaring

example.

The present position of Hekmatyar

and Rabbani, both lavishly supported

by Pakistan in attaining prominence

and authority to the extent of capturing

the highest office in Afghanistan, should

be an eye-opener. It would serve no

purpose in dubbing Afghans unreliable and thankless.

Peacemaking in Afghanistan has only just begun

By Dilip Hiro

LONDON: The latest decision by the Taliban militia in Afghanistan not to resume talks with the opposition has taken the peace process there virtually back to square one. Last Saturday, the Taliban ruled out further talks and rejected the idea of a "unified command" for Afghanistan under Taliban leadership.

The Taliban presently control about 80 per cent of Afghanistan territory and, in talks with political opponents held in Turkmenistan in March, reached an initial agreement on power-sharing and for an exchange of prisoners taken in the fighting that has gone on since the Taliban took power in 1996.

The latest decision by the Taliban to reject further talks follows clashes between Taliban forces and the opposition Northern Alliance just north of Kabul, in the northeastern zone, and in the central region of Hazarajat.

Now the United Nations will resume consultations with both sides and all countries affected by the fighting in

Afghanistan. The UN hopes to "explore the scope for agreement on confidence-building measures" which will draw both sides back to the conference table.

The earliest that meeting could take place would be April 26 — according to exiled Afghan circles — and is supposed to deal with such vital issues as the supreme leader of Afghanistan; the basis for the expansion of the present regime, whether ethnic, political or tribal; and the interpretation of the Shariah according to which the country will be governed.

In retrospect, the statement on March 14 by Andrew Tresorier of the UN Special Mission to Afghanistan of (UNNSMA), in the Turkmenistan capital of Ashkabad, that the two sides had decided to have a shared executive, legislature

and judiciary, and that they would meet in two weeks inside Afghanistan turned out to be too optimistic.

Does it mean the formation of a coali-

tion government in Kabul? No, according to the chief Taliban delegate to the Mullah Muhammad Omar.

The continued international isolation made the Taliban leaders change their uncompromising stance.

While the Taliban has moved to make amends for its weakness, it insists that any widening of the governmental base should be done along political lines, not ethnic.

But, as Muhammad Yunus Qanooni, the chief Northern Alliance delegate, revealed, "In Ashkabad we were pushing for power sharing along ethnic lines."

This was opposed by the Taliban. Its leaders fear that it will pave the way for a demand by the Northern Alliance that the provinces be given autonomy and Afghanistan turned into a federation. This would provide opportunities to the country's Central Asian neighbours and Iran to have a say in Afghanistan's internal affairs.

The strategy of the Taliban, according to Dr Javid, is to insist that any widening of the regime in Afghanistan be limited to only those opposition leaders who are currently inside the country.

In contrast, the Northern Alliance consists mainly of the Tajik-dominated Jamat-i-Islami, the Uzbek-dominated National Islamic Front, and the Hazara-dominated Hizb-i-Wahdat-i-Islami.

The exact ethnic composition of Afghanistan is not known. But most specialists put Pashtoons at 40-45 per cent of the population of over 19 million, Tajiks at 20-25 per cent, Uzbeks at 13-15 per cent, and Hazaras at 10-12 per cent. All of them belong to the Sunni sect of Islam except Hazaras, who are Shia. As such they feel an affinity with predominantly Shia Iran.

"Pashtoons, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras are the four pillars of the Afghan nation," said Dr Ahmad Javid, a former professor at Kabul University, now living in London. "To be stable an Afghan government needs to rest on all these pillars."

It is the predominance of Pashtoons in the military and civilian infrastructure of the Taliban regime that has made it vulnerable to the criticism by the world community that it is narrowly based. Also

the Moscow-backed regime in the 1980s, only changing sides in the spring of 1992. The Taliban regards his faction as communist and will refuse to deal with him.

A solution to these vexing problems may be found by the two sides to agree that a broad-based government should include representatives of all important tribes living in Afghanistan irrespective of their ethnic or political ties.

Finally, while Jamat-i-Islami and Hizb-i-Wahdat-i-Islami are committed to running Afghanistan according to the Shariat, their interpretation of the law could be at variance with that of the Taliban.

Only when these issues are settled satisfactorily, if, and when there is a next meeting, will there be a solid foundation on which a ceasefire can be declared and enforced.

It is therefore fair to say that the task of peacemaking in a country ravaged by war for the past 20 years has just begun.—Dawn/Inter Press Service.

FRONTIER POST

07 MAY 1999

Uzbek mly base near Afghan border blasted

TASHKENT (AFP) - A series of explosions occurred Thursday in a military warehouse near the town of Termez near Uzbekistan's border with Afghanistan, a spokesman for the Uzbek defense ministry said.

There was no immediate information about victims or the damage caused by the blasts, which hit about 4:00 p.m. (1100 GMT), the spokesman said. The explosions were loud enough to be heard by local residents.

The military warehouse, which is located in the village of Uchkizil on the outskirts of Termez, 25 kilometers (15 miles) north of the Afghan border, reportedly housed military weapons.

There were no civilians living within a two-kilometer (one-mile) radius of the site. An unidentified number of people are being evacuated from the surrounding area, the defense ministry spokesman said.

An earlier report said Uzbek President Islam Karimov and Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazzi agreed on a joint effort to achieve peace in neighboring Afghanistan, a spokesman at the Iranian embassy in Tashkent said Thursday.

Kharazzi, who wrapped up a two-day visit to the Central Asian republic Thursday, and Karimov said they would seek a peaceful solution to the conflict through the UN Security Council, said the spokesman, who declined to be identified.

"Even if all of Afghanistan is seized by the Taliban, Uzbekistan and Iran will... insist on a solution of this issue through the UN Security Council," he said.

The spokesman declined to reveal details of the talks between Karimov and Kharazzi.

Iran, opposed the Taliban, who control about 80 percent of Afghanistan, has preached regional cooperation, especially with the

help of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

But so far regional efforts have not been successful in finding a solution.

A meeting of a contact group that includes Russia, the United States and the six countries bordering Afghanistan -- the former Soviet republics of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, Pakistan and China and Iran -- had been scheduled to meet in Tashkent this spring, but has been postponed to this summer.

In March, representatives of the Taliban and opposition forces reached an initial agreement to create a power-sharing government to rule the country and exchange prisoners at negotiations in the Turkmen capital, Ashgabad.

But as the date for further negotiations to hammer out the details between the two sides neared in April, the Taliban rejected the idea of a power-sharing deal with opposition forces.

International staff to monitor relief activities in Badakhshan

PESHAWAR (NNI) - The United Nations has planned to send a team of international staff to Badakhshan shortly to monitor relief activities in the northern province, UN spokesperson said Friday.

The team will stay in Faizabad and will hold meetings with the local UN staff and Non-Governmental Organisations about the relief operation, Stephanie Bunker told reporters in the weekly press briefing at the UN Information center.

A number of teams of the UN international staff have visited Kabul, Jalalabad and Kandahar as part of its drive to assess relief operations in the war-devastated country.

All UN international workers were pulled out of Afghanistan in August last year following the killings of three UN staff, two local workers and an Italian mili-

tary official.

Bunker hinted that the UN also intends to send international staff to the central province of Bamiyan and northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif shortly.

In October last year the United Nations and Taliban inked a security agreement for the return of the UN international staff. The agreement has bound the ruling Taliban to provide protection to the UN staff and its premises and investigate into the killing of the 3 UN staff members.

In March, the UN announced plans to gradually send humanitarian workers back to Afghanistan after reaching an agreement with the Taliban to ensure safety and security of the UN international and national staff.

The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said last month that

he would consider withdrawal of the UN staff from Afghanistan for the second time if Taliban leadership did not ensure security to them.

He issued the warning in a report on Afghanistan to the UN Security Council and General Assembly. Taliban, he said, must fulfill its commitments to ensure the security of UN staff in Afghanistan and if they failed to keep this commitment, he would consider withdrawing UN staff from the country.

UN officials emphasise that Taliban must fulfil their commitments they have made concerning the security of UN staff. Unless there was clear evidence that all the commitments made by the Taliban regarding security had been carried out, UN would be compelled to review its decision about the returned of international staff.

FRONTIER POST 08 MAY 1999

Zahir Shah peace plan will certainly deliver: Karzai

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - Former Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister and aide of former King, Mr. Hamid Karzai has said that ex-King Mohammad Zahir Shah believes that only through intra-Afghan dialogue the long awaited problem could be resolved, therefore, he presented a peace formula.

In an interview, Hamid Karzai said that it could be an emergency Jirga comprising 35 elders. He added that 35-elders would approach the Afghans in each and every corner of Afghanistan for nominating their representatives to the broad-based grand assembly commonly known as Loya Jirga.

About the objectives and functions of the proposed Loya Jirga, the former Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister Hamid Karzai, said that participants in their assembly would discuss in depth the current situation of Afghanistan and would build up a consensus about a formula. Through such a formula, first the participants would try to give away just right of self-determination to the Afghans and later proposals could be made for formation of an interim government, establishment of a centralised authority in Afghanistan and an end to every sort of foreign interferences in affairs of that country.

In response to a question, Hamid Karzai made it clear that only the Afghan nation would elect their representatives to Loya Jirga. He added that only for supervising the elections of the members to Loya Jirga, former King Mohammad Zahir Shah has suggested a 35-members commission. He added that they are desirous for convening meeting of the proposed Loya Jirga inside Afghanistan. However, time and date in this connection could be announced later on.

Answering to another question, Hamid Karzai said that now the atmosphere was too much conducive for convening meeting of the proposed Loya Jirga. Elaborating his point of view, Hamid Karzai said that majority of the Afghans had been disheartened of ongoing in-fighting in Afghanistan and they desirous for return of an early peace.

Now when all military options had failed to empower a particular group in

Loya Jirga only solution

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - Known religious figure from Paktya province of Afghanistan, Maulvi Abdul Qayoom Neknam has expressed concern over the remarks of Taliban leader Maulvi Wakeel Ahmad Mutawakal against former King Mohammad Zahir Shah. He said *Loya Jirga* meeting was the only solution to Afghan issue.

In a rejoinder to Maulvi Mutawakal, Maulvi Abdul Qayoom Neknaam said that unfortunately the foreign forces who were fuelling the war flames in Afghanistan had foisted useless people on the Afghans. He added that earlier such foreign countries had patronised *jehadic* commanders and now were financing unknown people on the name of Taliban. He said that majority of the Taliban leaders is stranger in the Afghan society as no one knew about their kith and kin as well as home village and towns. He asked Maulvi Wakeel Ahmad to first introduce himself with the Afghan nation and later think about issuing statements against former King Mohammad Zahir Shah.

Maulvi Abdul Qayoom Neknaam recalled that it was Maulvi Wakeel Ahmad and his other seniors and juniors who mustered support of the Afghans by announcing their whole hearted support to the former King's proposal for convening an emergency meeting of the *Loya Jirga*. Similarly, almost all the Taliban leaders captured parts and regions of Afghanistan when they have declared former King as their leader. However, after reaching Kabul, the Taliban stalwarts like the *jehadic* commanders changed their minds and now they are reluctant to give away just right of self-determination to the Afghans.

In fact, Maulvi Neknaam alleged that majority of the Parcham party elements who were bent upon damaging the Islamic identity of Afghanistan, like Wakeel Ahmad had adjusted them among the Taliban ranks and now were working on their own assignments. He added that now the Afghans are aware of such elements and they determined to resist their conspiracies against Afghanistan.

The religious figure said that former King Mohammad Zahir Shah despite loosing power in 1973 last is still enjoying respect and credibility among Afghans. He added that majority of the Afghans who had been made disheartened by the former communists, *jehadic* commanders and now Taliban, are not only welcoming the peace proposals. He said that former king is surrounded by capable and competent Afghans in all over Afghanistan and only he is in the better position to lead the war-affected Afghans at this crucial stage.

Afghanistan, therefore, former King Mohammad Zahir Shah's proposals could be very fruitful. He was of the firm belief that with honouring such proposals, the long awaited conflict could easily be resolved and said that UN, OIC, 6+2 countries and others need to implement Mohammad Zahir Shah proposals.

About participation of the former king in the proposed Jirga meeting, Hamid Karzai said that since a long he and his supporters had always struggled for a negotiated solution to the conflict. They

in this connection, insisted on intra-Afghan dialogues as well as an end to every sort of foreign interferences in affairs of Afghanistan. He said that if Afghan nations insists on former King Mohammad Zahir Shah's participation in the proposed Loya Jirga meeting then he would honour such wishes of the people. However, he was of the firm belief that Zahir Shah's proposals could enable the war-affected Afghans of getting a rid of ongoing bloodshed and destruction in their motherland.

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL 12 MAY 1999

Agha Shahi for meaningful talks to solve Afghan crisis

By Ashfaq Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: The twenty years of fighting in Afghanistan has proved that the only solution to the conflict is serious and meaningful intra-Afghan dialogue, said Agha Shahi, former foreign minister of Pakistan.

Agha Shahi who has been remained part of most of the high-level talks held on Afghanistan in the past, was talking to The News at a local hotel on Tuesday. "Nobody whatsoever, could find a durable political solution to the Afghan problem except the Afghan factions representing various linguistic and ethnic groups," Agha Shahi added. He said that the 20-year long struggle by the UN and other countries had so far made no headway and proposed formation of a truly representative Loya Jirga from Afghans as one of the ways to find a just and durable solution to the imbroglio.

He said all the efforts being made in the past were met with utter failure which clearly indicated lack of interest on the part of Afghan leaders to solve the problem once and for all.

He recalled that late President

Gen Ziaul Haq tried to constitute a broad-based interim government in the war-ravaged country which also bore no fruit and Afghanistan is a bleeding wound till today. Nevertheless a formula had been reached for the establishment of interim government well before the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, according to which mujahidden leaders, Dr Najibullah were to be jointly inducted in the interim set-up.

Asked whether former Afghan monarch, Zahir Shah has a role to play, he said that there was apparently no possibility of such a role for the aged king. "If in case there is such an arrangement, then, what would be its timing and who are supposed to bring Zahir Shah and get the things settled," said Agha Shahi.

"Pakistan would have to face severe criticism even from Afghan people and leaders of various warring factions if it tried to pave the way for a role for Zahir Shah in ending the crisis," said the former diplomat. Pakistan and other neighbouring countries would have to bear the consequences as far as the problem remains unresolved.

Six-Plus-Two Group discusses Afghan issue

NEW YORK: Ambassadors of the Six-Plus-Two Group met here to find ways for seeking a political solution to the Afghan issue.

The meeting follows an initiative by the United Nations and its Security Council after recent fighting in Afghanistan. The group includes — besides Russia and the United States — Pakistan, Iran, China, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

The US wants solution of the Afghan crisis so that the Central Asian states find way to the open markets

and hot waters. The US does not favour the route of Iran in this regard and there are difficulties with regard to the route of Turkey. Other routes are those of Russia and Ukraine.

Meanwhile, a report from Dushanbe said the President of Tajikistan Imomali Rahmonov and Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister have emphasised the urgency for implementing the UN Security Council resolutions on Afghanistan and early convening of the Six Plus Two Group meeting.—PPI

Foreigner killed in Jalalabad

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR—A foreign woman was mysteriously shot dead by unknown persons in Jalalabad the headquarter of the Nangarhar province and her dead body was recovered from a deserted area.

The Taliban administration have confirmed the reports but they are reluctant to disclose her identity. However, they claimed that the accused has been arrested and he would be trialed according to the Islamic laws. As per reports, in Guli Bagh area near Jalalabad a dead body of a foreign woman was recovered on Sunday morning. The Taliban officers took the dead body in to their custody.

It was also reported that dead body is of the Iranian girl who allegedly abducted two children from Daudzai, Peshawar a few days ago. The girl was later on arrested in Jalalabad. However, the Taliban leaders both in Peshawar and Jalalabad are reluctant to either confirm or contradict such reports.

NATION

04 MAY 1999

Vaccination for Afghan children re-launched

ISLAMABAD: After more than two years of interruption due to conflict, a vaccination programme has again been started in Parwan province, north of Kabul.

The ICRC has assessed the situation in 11 vaccination centres and rehabilitated an efficient cold chain in nine of them with material airlifted from Kabul to Bagram. This will make it possible to immunize 50,000 children and 66,000 women against the most common diseases as part of the campaigns organised by UNICEF and the public health authorities.

UNICEF will now take over the monitoring and coordination of the vaccination programme while the ICRC continues to provide logistical support.

The ICRC is currently assessing the situation in six additional centres located in Kapisa province, north of Kabul.—APP

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FRONTIER POST

17 MAY 1999

Poppy eradication drive continues in Kandhar

QUETTA (APP) - Taliban Islamic movement of Afghanistan on the third day on Sunday continued destruction of poppy crop in southern province of Kandhar.

The destruction is part of a Taliban deal with United Nations Drugs Control Programme (UNDCP) to eradicate 20 per cent of the total poppy crop in the three districts of Kandhar Taliban sources here said.

On Sunday poppy growers in Maiwand district of Kandhar destroyed standing poppy crop on an area of 25 hectares.

The Taliban high commissioner for drugs control Mullah Abdul Hameed Akhundzada supervised the whole operation in the presence of local Shoura members and growers.

The UNDCP is conducting a four-year pilot project in the three

districts of Kandhar to completely eliminate poppy by the year 2001.

Under the plan, UNDCP will provide seeds to grow alternate crops, rehabilitate irrigation channels and improve infrastructure.

The Afghan high commissioner said the start of the destruction process shows that the Taliban are serious in putting an end to cultivation of poppy.

According to UN experts opium extracted from these fields fetches 40 to 50 US dollars per kilogram while the same amount of wheat will fetch less than a dollar for the growers.

The operation to destroy poppy will continue for the next days to achieve the target of 20 per cent reduction.

Three killed : Three persons including two women were killed

while a business man was injured in different incidents in province, police said on Sunday.

According to details two persons including a woman were killed at Sohbat Poor Area of Naseerabad division. Deceased were identified as Sabira and Ghulam Ali. The cause of their death stated to be their illicit relations.

Police registered a case against accused Saifal Brohi, who was escaped the scene after killing.

In another incident in Quetta the wife of a PDSP Imtiaz Hussain Shah was crushed to death as a vehicle hit her in Cant area.

A business man of Quetta city identified as Ghous-ud-din sustained serious bullet injuries as unidentified kidnappers opened fire on him after their failure in kidnapping attempt.

Cirrhosis claims 150 lives in Herat

ISLAMABAD, May 16: Cirrhosis has claimed more than 150 lives in Herat province of Afghanistan, a United Nations spokesman said on Sunday.

Stephanie Bunker told the NNI on Sunday that the disease had erupted in Gulrang district of Herat province claiming 150-200 lives. A number of people, she said, were still suffering from it.

The basic cause of the disease,

she said, was a poisonous plant that grew along with the wheat crop. When the people use the wheat bread, they catch the disease.

Bunker said that the UN agencies and NGOs recently held a meeting in Herat province to evolve a strategy for coping with the situation. After the meeting, a joint team of WHO, Public Health Department and Agricultural Department of the Taliban and the

UN Foods and Agricultural Wing visited Gulrang district and examined the situation in 11 villages.

She said that the UN with the cooperation of the Taliban authorities had now dispatched medical supplies to the disease-hit area in Herat province.

The disease had erupted in Gulrang district some 25 years ago. Now, it has broken out for the second time this year.—NNI

DAWN 17 MAY 1999

FRONTIER POST

20 MAY 1999

Afghan aid workers fear Kosovo will sap scarce funds

KABUL (AFP) - Massive foreign aid demands in Kosovo have exacted a toll on Afghanistan and further complicated life for aid groups, already struggling to re-establish themselves here.

"Yeah, I'm mad because they haven't sent me my money because of Kosovo and that means I haven't been able to pay my staff, pay for my supplies and I owe people money," American aid worker Mary MacMakin said.

As the director for Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Support for Afghanistan (PARSA), MacMakin, a 70-year-old grandmother, is responsible for wool spinning cooperatives run by women.

She also relies on the funding

body United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to run other programmes which include training illiterate orphans for apprenticeships in the electrical trades.

"The work is going on but the funding is precarious," she says.

Her sentiments are echoed by many aid workers who see Kosovo emerging as a rival for scarce funds, and as an unfortunate distraction which is slowing down the bureaucrats who allocate aid.

According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), it needs 143 million dollars for its immediate efforts in helping 750,000 refugees who have fled Kosovo.

Total pledges exceeded 100 million dollars following an urgent appeal to Western governments a week ago.

"Anytime there's another humanitarian crisis it obviously detracts attention from Afghanistan, and Kosovo is holding the world's attention now," said PACTEC airlines Kabul director David Brooks.

PACTEC is a non-profit airline and communications support group which specialises in ferrying members of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) across borders.

Most NGOs left Afghanistan in July last year after a dispute with the ruling Taliban involving the relocation their operations to an abandoned polytechnic.

UN, neighbours urged to support Zahir Shah

By Ashfaq Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: Afghan intellectuals, former ministers and parliamentarians on Thursday urged the UN and neighbouring countries to support former king Zahir Shah to pave the way for the formation of Loya Jirga to resolve the 22-year old conflict in Afghanistan.

These views came from the speakers at a one-day seminar titled "New efforts for peace and practical steps towards constituting Loya Jirga". The seminar was attended by various Afghans based at Peshawar and members of non-governmental organisations. It was arranged by newly formed 'centre for the protection of press freedom in Afghanistan'.

The speakers regretted that pro-

longed efforts by the UN and other countries had failed to establish peace and tranquility in the war-battered country and stressed the need to bring the scattered Afghans on a single platform and seek solution to the chronic problems in line with the traditional Loya Jirga.

The seminar was attended by most of pro-Zahir Shah Afghan leaders who are active to bring the former aged king Zahir Shah. We need him (Zahir Shah) not to rule the country but to unite the warring factional groups who had caused immense ruination to the country. Demanding a free press, the speakers said that Afghans were unaware of their country's situation due to curbs on the press inside Afghanistan. They said that equal representation should be given to

all factions, women, political parties including Northern Alliance and ruling Taliban. Resolutions were adopted at the end of the seminar, asking for adopting confidence building measures to create national unity and solidarity in Afghanistan. Another resolution stressed the inclusion of all political and intellectual figures and women in the formation of jirga. Another resolution said that six plus two countries should be given top role and the UN representative for Afghanistan in future should be empowered to take independent decisions. It asked the UN to back the return of Zahir Shah and help in the formation of Loya Jirga and its installation in Afghanistan to seek a durable political solution of the problem.

Cirrhosis claims 150 lives in Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (NNI) — Cirrhosis has claimed more than 150 lives in Heart province of Afghanistan, said a United Nations spokesman on Sunday.

Stephanie Bunker told the newsmen on Sunday that the disease has erupted in Gulrang district of Herat province claiming 150-200 lives. A number of people, she said, are still suffering from it.

The basic cause of the disease, she said, is a poisonous plant that grows along with the wheat crop. When the people use the wheat bread, they suffer from the disease.

Bunker said that the UN agencies and NGOs recently held a meeting in Herat province to evolve a strategy for coping with the situation. After the meeting, a joint team of WHO, Public Health Department and Agricultural Department of the Taliban and UN Foods and Agricultural Wing visited Gulrang district and examined the situation in 11 villages. She said that the United Nations with the cooperation of the Taliban authorities have now dispatched medical supplies to the disease-hit area in Herat province.

The disease had for the first time erupted in Gulrang district some 25 years ago.

Taliban foil arms smuggling attempt

By our correspondent

WANA: Taliban administration in Afghanistan have foiled a bid of smuggling arms and ammunition to Lahore in Pakistan and arrested a carrier.

Reports reaching from across the border revealed that a pick-up loaded with arms and ammunition was intercepted at Beermal check-post at Durand Line, border between the two neighbouring states.

Taliban authorities claimed that the arms were being smuggled to Angoor Adda area in Pakistan.

Seized weapons included two anti-helicopter missiles, three rockets, 30 land mines and anti-aircraft gun.

Driver of the pick-up, whose name could not be ascertained, was also detained by the Taliban administration.

Rapist publicly lashed in Afghanistan

KABUL: Afghanistan's Taliban Friday publicly lashed a man accused of raping a woman in the militia's northern stronghold of Kunduz, official Radio Shariat said Saturday.

Ghulam Hazrat, living in the adjacent province of Baghlan, had forced his way into a house in Doshi district in February and raped a man's wife before being caught by the Taliban police, it said.

The rapist was sentenced to a hundred lashes by a Kunduz military court after he confessed his crime, the radio said.

In around 80 per cent of the country which the Taliban control, married adulterers are stoned to death and thieves have limbs amputated under an ultra-strict interpretation of Islamic Sharia law.—AFP

Zahir Shah plan welcomed

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR — Shehzada Masud, Secretary of the Great National United Islamic Front of Afghanistan while welcoming the recent proposal of former King Mohammad Zahir Shah, has said that it had renewed the expectations of those war-affected Afghans who since a long were desirous for return of peace in their motherland.

"Those who sincerely want return of peace in Afghanistan, must back the proposal of former King Mohammad Zahir Shah otherwise war-flames from

inside Afghanistan could affect the whole world," he remarked in a Press release issued here at Peshawar on Wednesday. He added that it is crystal clear that not only majority of the Afghans are disheartened of bloodshed and destruction in their motherland but even the regional and neighbouring countries also favour a negotiated solution to the issue.

Shehzada Masud recalled that uncertain situation of Afghanistan since 1979 has proved that Afghans could be governed by force. He said that outcome of such steps would not be different then that of late Dr. Najibullah, Prof. Mu-

jaddadi and Prof. Rabbani governments. He said that it is need of the hour for all such forces to realise their past mistakes and honour wishes and expectations of the war-affected Afghans.

The Secretary of Great National United Front of Afghanistan has said that proposals of former King Mohammad Zahir Shah give maximum importance to the traditional loya Jirga which is the sole democratic institution of that war-affected country. He said that with convening a meeting of the traditional Loya Jirga, war affected people could get their just right of self-determination

NATION

24 MAY 1989

UN asked to support moderate Afghans

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR - while expressing grave concern over the renewed fighting and bloodshed in Afghanistan, Shahzadah Masud, secretary of the Great National United Front of Afghanistan has urged the UNO, USA, OIC and other big forces to extend moral and political support to the moderate and democratic minded Afghans who are sincerely struggling for resolving the Afghan conflict.

In a press release issued here on Saturday Shahzadah Masud said that now when the summer was ahead, the warring factions were intensifying attacks against each other thus further enhancing the hardship of the already 20 years long war affected people.

He was of the view that new era of internal fighting might be a lesson for those global institutions which struggle for reconciliation and finding out a peaceful and political solution to the bloody conflict. He said that it was the need of the hours that all outside forces must reconsider their policies towards Afghanistan.

He recalled that due to the interference of some foreign and regional countries, the military and jehadic forces entered the devastating struggle of grabbing power after the fall of Soviet backed regime in Kabul.

He added that on one hand, these factions had converted Afghanistan into ruins while on the other hand millions of Afghans were forced to leave their homes after loosing their nears and dears in the useless and meaningless fightings. He said that it was surprising, that UNO and others always concentrate their peace efforts on the warring factions which yield no result for the Afghans.

Shahzadah Masud said that it was a good omen that majority of the Afghan were agree to the solution of the conflict, and almost all of them were favouring to convene the traditional emergency Loya Jirga. But, he said that, all of them were scattered and unable to resist those who were responsible for ongoing bloodshed in Afghanistan. He added that now the responsibility rests with UNO, USA, OIC and other peace-loving countries to take steps for supporting all of the peace loving and democratic groups, and factions for pulling Afghanistan and its people out of existing crisis.

Describing Muhamad Zahir Shah, the former Afghan king, as a symbol of national unity, Shahzadah said that the former king plays a vital role in the resolution of Afghan crisis and help united his divided and war-affected people.

Afghan team to discuss with Europe current crisis

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - A 6-member delegation of Peace and National Unity of Afghanistan headed by Dr. Aman Ullah Rasool left Peshawar for Germany and Switzerland where it would exchange views on current situation of Afghanistan and the efforts aimed at a political solution to the conflict.

The delegation has been invited by the Afghans settled in Germany, Switzerland and other European countries. Before leaving the delegates held a detail meeting with the UNO special representative for Afghanistan in Islamabad and apprised him of his renewed efforts to produce consensus among the Afghans regarding the future of their motherland.

Dr. Aman Ullah Rasool while talking to *The Nation* on telephone said that they are struggling to ascertain views of the Afghans about the current situation of Afghanistan. He added that majority of the Afghans are now disheartened of the regular bloodshed in Afghanistan and wish return of the peace. However, some of the hurdles didn't allow the peace loving Afghans to get the objectives, therefore, his team is determined to resolve such grievances of their countrymen.

Dr. Aman Ullah Rasool while answering to a question, said that it is wrong to say that they are reluctant to talk with the leaders of the warring factions. "We are ready to go inside Afghanistan and hold negotiations with Taliban as well as the Northern Alliance," he remarked. He said that they believe that only Afghans could resolve their internal problems, therefore, they should be given an opportunity to sit across a table and find out ways and means to pull Afghanistan and its people out of the existing crisis.

In response to another question, Dr. Aman Ullah Rasool said that on completion of their trip to European countries, they intends to visit Afghanistan as well as the region for talks with all of the forces and groups, particularly to negotiate with those who are involved in the ongoing internal fighting.

NATION

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Afghans urged to follow Zahir Shah plan

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - Maulvi Abdul Qayoom Neknam, a religious scholar from Paktia Province of Afghanistan has said that last decade's events had proved that both jehadic and Taliban forces had failed to drum up support both internally and externally while former king Mohammad Zahir Shah who is playing a neutral role since 1973 last is not only acceptable to majority of the Afghans but can restore lost image of that war-affected country at international level.

In a rejoinder to various Taliban and Jehadic leaders on Monday, Maulvi Abdul Qayoom Neknam said that neither Afghans nor the international community know about Taliban. And similar is the position of jehadic leaders who are known for destroying Afghanistan and killing its innocent people just for their own interests. He recalled that it is crystal clear that Jehadic leaders like Gulbadin, Rabbani, Sayaf, Prof. Sibghat Ullah were imposed by the foreign forces on Afghanistan and similarly Taliban are also production of those foreign forces.

The religious scholar from Afghanistan expressed surprise over the policies of UN, OIC and other independ-

ent analysts who were still expecting a lot from both Taliban and Jehadic leaders. He said that both the forces have not only made disappointing and disheartened those Afghans who have rendered tremendous sacrifices against the former Soviet troops and its installed regimes but have also did a lot for the protection sovereign, solidarity and Islamic identity of their motherland. He was of the view that it is needs of the hours that UN, OIC, USA and others must realise the previous mistakes and approach the former king Mohammad Zahir Shah if they sincerely wants an early solution to the long awaited conflict through peaceful and political ways.

Levelling serious allegations against Taliban, Maulvi Abdul Qayoom Neknam said that in fact they defaming the sacred religion of Islam. Almost of Taliban leaders are stranger in the Afghan society and they are interpreting the sacred norms of Islam just for their personal as well as for the pleasure of their foreign masters. He diverted attention to several incidents whereas Taliban have indulged themselves in slaughtering the innocent children and other civilians. He was of the firm belief that it could be impossible for Taliban to govern Afghanistan through guns for a long time.

Taliban supporter, son shot dead

From Our Correspondent

KHAR, (Bajaur Agency) - A leading supporter of Taliban from Kunar Province of Afghanistan along with his son was shot dead by the armed persons affiliated with Shura-i-Nazar of Ahmad Shah Masud on Saturday.

Reports from Asadabad, headquarter of Kunar Province of Afghanistan, disclose that Said Ahmad was coming back to Asadabad from Jalalabad along with his son Mohammad Hashim.

At Narang, the armed persons, stated to be the supporters of Ahmad Shah Masud opened firing on them.

As a result of the firing, both Said Ahmad and his son Mohammad Hashim died on the spot.

Their driver received injuries. The Taliban leaders denouncing the act said the culprits will be awarded exemplary punishment if arrested.

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THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

20 MAY 1999

Taliban start destroying poppy

QUETTA: Taliban have started destroying poppy crop in the country's southern region where 64 per cent of the country's total opium was produced last year.

According to sources, this is the first time Afghanistan, the biggest opium producer in the world after Burma, has started destroying poppy crop in this part of the country.

Kandahar Governor Maulvi Muhammad Hassan Rehmani said his country was ready to destroy poppy procured by it provided it is assisted in repair of its agriculture sector, improvement and maintenance of infrastructure and Karez (under ground water channels) de-

stroyed in infighting during the past 20 years.

He said Islam also teaches us to refrain from use of narcotics.

He said "our government has no means to do this on its own due to scarcity of financial resources. The destruction process was voluntary and reflective of their desire to give up the poppy cultivation".

Under the agreement Taliban will destroy 20 per cent of the poppy crop and the UN in return will carry out development work and provide seeds for other crops. Last year in Khakrez area poppy was cultivated on 518 hectares of land.

According to UNDCP annual

poppy survey, last year an estimated total of 63,674 hectares of opium was cultivated while total production of opium in the country was 3,269 metric tones.

Governor Maulvi Muhammad Hassan Rehmani said that the small amount of destruction was just a sample for the world to see that Taliban do want to get rid of this crop.

He, however, said the UNDCP must cooperate and extend facilities to the poor farmers in converting to other crops. The poppy eradication will also continue for a couple of days. The operation would also be launched in Ghorak and Maiwand districts of Kandahar province Saturday. — APP

Taliban reluctant to accept Shoora's plea

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR — The Taliban leaders are reluctant to accept the Eastern Shoora Commandars plea to give a written shape to their promises and commitments for an end to uncertain situation in the eastern province of Afghanistan.

One of the Commandars who had been involved in the preliminary talks, on the invitation of Taliban leaders like Maulvi Wakeel Ahmad Mutawakal, Maulvi Abdul Qadeer and others, told *The Nation* that only a few commandars arrived in the border town of Jalalabad in the light of verbal commitments of Taliban leaders. But remaining 50 commandars, affiliated with the leading *je-hadic* factions are reluctant to join hands with Taliban.

As a result of Taliban's reluctance to sign a written agreement, a few days ago, their soldiers resorted to fighting in Laghman province. The fighting is

still going in various parts of Laghman province.

The member of former Eastern Zonal Shoora while answering to a question, said that they had demanded of Taliban to provide them due share in power and government, return their confiscated houses, vehicles and other properties and release all arrested supporters. He further said that during preliminary negotiations, held through some of their sympathisers, the Taliban leaders had promised for its implementation. But later on they refused to give a written status to these promises.

He dispelled the impression that all former *Jehadic* commandars had made a reconciliation with Taliban and now are supporting their government. He added that so far, more than 50 commandars had decided to refrain from extending any sort of support and co-operation to Taliban.

'Taliban ready to end poppy cultivation'

ISLAMABAD: The Taliban have destroyed hundreds of acres of poppy cultivated land in Khatiz district of Kandahar province of Afghanistan.

Taliban Information Minister Mulla Abdul Hai Mutmaen said if the United Nations Drugs Control Programme, UNDCP, extends economic assistance to the farmers, they would destroy poppy cultivation in other parts of the country as well.

He told newsmen in Kandahar that almost thirty per cent opium crop in Khatiz district was destroyed. It has been decided to continue the process in the district and two other districts of Kandahar province, Ghorak and Maiwand for another few days. It would be the initial anti-narcotics control process, Mutmaen said.

He hoped the UN and other donor countries would keep into consideration the issue of poor Afghan farmers who meet their needs and requirements through opium. — PPI

NATION

20 MAY 1999

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

16 MAY 1999

Mines kill or maim 300 Afghans every month

KABUL (AFP) - In Afghanistan, one of the most heavily mined countries on earth, farmers run an everyday risk of losing their limbs, cattle and even their lives as they work the land amid shifting frontlines, UN officials say.

UN figures show intensified bombing has cut casualties by half, but at least 300 civilians including farmers are killed or maimed monthly by mines, said Latif Matin, head of the UN demining agency in Kabul.

Most adults fall victim while carrying out the vital tasks of herding and tending crops, as well as gathering food and water and travelling around the countryside.

Matin said 223 square kilometers of the total 26,000 square kilometers of cultivable land in Afghanistan was still mined.

Many more farms lie useless because of the weapons that infest irrigation systems and a multi-million-dollar clearing programme has made safe only 164 square kilometers of land.

The non-governmental organisation Handicap International recently estimated there were 10 million mines in Afghanistan.

Matin said landmines were responsible for annual losses of about 51,000 tonnes of cereal with a local value of more than 13.7 million US dollars.

'The mine-related problem of Afghan farmers is hugely serious and is among our top priority tasks,' he said. 'Farmers are particularly vulnerable because of the fluidity of frontlines — typically a warring faction holds a village for a short period and mines it before it is kicked out by a rival group.'

One land holder, Halimjan, lost his leg two years ago in a landmine blast on his farm near Jabul Seraj, the provincial capital of Kapisa province. He had decided to return to till the fields when calm returned to the area.

'I was thrown up into the air as I pressed my spade into the soil to prepare it for spring wheat sowing, and next thing I found myself in a clinic with a severed leg,' he said.

'One feels heart-broken and dependent on others,' he said, while thanking the Almighty for saving his life. Now the father of eight has come to the Red Cross Orthopaedic Centre in the Taliban-controlled capital Kabul to exercise his new artificial leg, which he says is not good enough to let him work the land.

The middle-aged farmer says he feels completely broken as he has to rely entirely on the female members of his family to take care of the farm. His eldest son is only ten and his brothers have refused to help.

Halimjan said four other farmers were killed by mines around the same time he was injured in Jabul Seraj, once an active frontline between the ruling Taliban and supporters of the opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood. According to official figures, 3.05 million hectares of land was under cultivation between 1976 to 1978, the year of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This has now fallen to 2.6 million hectares, a 15 percent reduction which Ministry of Agriculture official Sahebdad Pakbeen said was caused by a list of factors, topped by the landmines threat.

Afghanistan world's top mine-contaminated country

ISLAMABAD: The indiscriminate use of landmines by all parties has left Afghanistan with perhaps the greatest mine-contamination country in the world.

Despite a demonstrated success of the UN Mine Action Programme in Afghanistan (MAPA), the sheer scale of mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) problems in Afghanistan remain daunting. Over 700 square kilometers of land contains mines or UXOs. The country remains plagued by the dreadful remnants of conflict — landmines and UXOs — which continue to arbitrarily kill and maim innocent people of that country and inhibit the reconstruction of the war-torn nation.

Each month as many as 300 or

more innocent civilians (many young children) continue to be brutally

killed or maimed for life due to ex-

plosive devices. Men, women and

children continue to live in fear of the

footpaths and fields around them.

Refugees and displaced persons are afraid to return to their homes. After years of conflict, the fear of landmines continue to play a major role in the lives of many Afghans, MAPA officials here said.

During the past 10 years, the MAPA has cleared over 165 square kilometers of minefields and 164 sq kms of contaminated battle area, re-

moving almost 200,000 mines and

over 710,000 pieces of ordnance in

the process. Yet even with these ef-

forts, some 700 sq kms of land still

contains mines and/or UXOs. Of this

amount nearly one half is considered

'high priority', posing a direct threat

to human safety and economic recov-

ery. Despite the sheer scale of the re-

maining mines and UXOs problem,

the Mine Action Centre for

Afghanistan (MACA) estimates that

most high priority areas can be

cleared by the year 2007 if the cur-

rent funding and operational levels

are maintained.—PPI

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

02 MAY 1999

Taliban seek help to eradicate poppy

KABUL: Taliban movement renewed a pledge on Monday to ban what is one of the world's largest opium crops if its poverty-stricken farmers are given help to find alternative crops.

Najibullah Shams, Secretary General of Taliban's anti-narcotics commission said after the destruction of poppy crop at the weekend of hectares (acres) in three main districts of the southern region of Kandahar.

"We guarantee to eliminate poppy cultivation in a very short period provided the world community assistis our farmers," he told Reuters.

Some 64 percent Afghanistan's opium harvest of more than 3,200 tonnes last year came from Kandahar province. After refining, about 10 tonnes of opium produces one tonne of heroin.

Shams said it was the start of the Taliban's campaign to wipe out poppy growth across Afghanistan, most of which is controlled by the Taliban, but said they needed help from the outside world.

"The infrastructure has been shattered by two decades of war here and needs to be repaired. Farmers are poor and need help for repairs of wells, irrigation channels and farms," he said.

"With all these broken, farmers tend to grow the poppy because it thrives in relatively poor soil and needs little irrigation. The Taliban can't offer alternative to these poor farmers, that's why we are asking for help," he added.

The destruction in Kandahar was carried out by the Taliban in Ghorak, Khakrez and Maiwand districts, where the United Nations Interna-

tional Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) funds a pilot project to persuade farmers to grow other crops.

The \$16.4 million pilot project started in November 1997, targets Kandahar — the spiritual and cultural heartland of the Taliban — and the Shinwar district of Jalalabad as a starting point for wiping out poppy growth. The UNDCP intends to launch a drive to wipe out the poppy throughout the country if this project proves successful.

Afghanistan ranks alongside Myanmar as the world's biggest producers of opium. Some 60 percent of the heroin produced from Afghan opium makes its way to the West through porous borders with Pakistan, Iran and Central Asia.

The Taliban say the 10-year UNDCP project is ineffective. Poppy cultivation can be brought to immediate halt.

"Why should we launch a 10-year project if we can put an end to poppy cultivation in short span of time?" Shams asked.

The movement wants the UNDCP to channel funds through the them as they feel "poor UN spending patterns make the project ineffectiveness".

"The UNDCP pilot encourages others to grow poppy as initial records for 1999 show that the poppy cultivation is on the rise here," he noted.

Shams said, "the Taliban can simply ban poppy cultivation but we have no resources to offer alternative crops to the affected farmers."

If we get funds then the world will see the miraculous eradication of drug here, he said.—Reuters

Taliban destroy poppy crop in Kandahar

KABUL: The Taliban authorities have destroyed poppy cultivation on a vast area in three districts of Kandahar province, said director general anti-narcotics department Abdul Hameed Akhunzada while talking to newsmen here.

He said the Taliban took the step on basis of an agreement reached between them and United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and farmers of specific districts. Under the agreement, he said, UNDCP will provide job facilities to farmers and they will not cultivate poppy.

Poppy cultivation on almost 200 hectare land was destroyed in Khasmic district, in Ghorak district poppy on 100 to 200 hectare and similarly in Maiwand district, poppy on some 25 hectare land was destroyed, he added.

Akhunzada said three-day operation was conducted in presence of local and foreign journalists, UNDCP officials and representatives of coordination committee for aid to Afghanistan. He said earlier people used to cultivate poppy due to constraints and compulsions but now when poppy farmers have realised that alternate arrangement has been provided to them, they agreed to destroy the crop and pledged not to cultivate again.—PPI

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DAWN 08 MAY 1999

Taliban ask Turkmenistan to host peace talks

ASHKABAD, May 7: An official from the Taliban held a meeting with officials of the Turkmenistan foreign ministry on a proposal about the their country (Turkmenistan) hosting a new round of peace talks with the Afghan opposition.

He also discussed prospects for the revival of trade, a Turkmen government source said.

Abdur Rahman Zahid, Afghanistan's deputy foreign minister, "is talking about the possibility of renewing the Afghan talks in Ashkabad," the source said.

Representatives of Afghanistan's opposition alliance were due in Turkmenistan soon, he added.

Turkmenistan, the only Central Asian state to hold direct talks with the Taliban, played a key role in brokering the Ashkabad peace accord in March between the Taliban and the opposition alliance.

But fighting resumed almost

immediately after the deal was agreed.

Zahid, who arrived on Thursday, is also discussing trade issues with senior Turkmen economic officials.

Turkmenistan does not officially recognize the movement, but has strong economic and ethnic motives to develop ties with Afghanistan, despite discomfort in some other former Soviet republics.

The impoverished desert nation of five million has huge reserves of natural gas but little access to world markets, and a two billion project for a pipeline to Pakistan via Afghanistan has been frozen due to the Afghan fighting.

Thousands of ethnic Turkmens also live across the Afghan border, flooding back sporadically into Turkmenistan when fighting breaks out in northern Afghanistan.—Reuters

FRONTIER POST

08 MAY 1999

Taliban, AI official discuss HR situation

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - An official of the Amnesty International Abbas Faiz has discussed human rights issue with the Taliban officials in New York. Faiz told VOA that he too exchanged views with the Taliban on the issue of direct contact between the two sides to make it possible for the Amnesty to convey its viewpoint to them directly. He said many a time, newspapers particularly regional papers quoted the Amnesty International but their reports did not contain all the facts. He said Taliban expressed readiness to accept the Amnesty demands but said that some other demands could not be accepted due to religious requirements. He termed his talks with the Taliban positive and said he wanted to convey Amnesty message on human rights situation to the Taliban.

Taliban deny visa to Pakistani journalists

ISLAMABAD: Taliban have barred Pakistani journalists to visit Afghanistan to cover the massive anti-polio vaccination campaign in the war-ravaged country begins on May 9.

The UNICEF had arranged visit for journalists from Peshawar and Islamabad but Taliban embassy in Islamabad and consulate in Peshawar denied visas to journalists.

The journalists were planned to proceed to Jalalabad, Kandahar and Herat to witness the three-day immunization campaign.

Taliban have stopped issuing visas to Pakistan journalists after reports that the student militia killed a large number of civilians when they captured Mazar-e-Sharif and Bamyan.

The UNICEF office in Islamabad had also sent request to the Taliban embassy in Islamabad and their consulate in Peshawar but the plea was

turched down.

Meanwhile, various journalist groups have condemned ban on Pakistani journalists by Taliban authorities.

President Rawalpindi Press Club and secretary general Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists Fauzia Shahid have condemned restrictions on Pakistani reporters by Taliban and described it as move to suppress freedom of expression.

The press club president said Taliban had disappointed Pakistani journalist community by refusing them visas and urged the militia central leadership to take serious notice of the Taliban ambassador Maulvi Saeed-ur-Rahman Haqqani and consul general Maulvi Naeemi.

Fauzia Shahid said that ban on Pakistani journalists would further damage the reputation of Taliban and it will lead to resentment among Pakistani journalists.—NNI

Taliban bar Pak journalists from visiting Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Taliban have barred Pakistani journalists to visit Afghanistan to cover the massive anti-polio vaccination campaign in the war-ravaged country begins on May 9.

The UNICEF had arranged visit for journalists from Peshawar and Islamabad but Taliban embassy in Islamabad and the militia Consulate in Peshawar denied visas to journalists.

The journalists were planned to proceed to Jalalabad, Kandahar and Herat to witness the three-day immunisation campaign.

NATION

08 MAY 1999

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Taliban accuse Iran of mly intrusion

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia Monday accused Iran of militarily intruding into western Afghan provinces last week and lodged a protest, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

"Iranian troops intruded into Farah and Herat provinces on Thursday and carried out military operations against innocent Afghan civilians," the Taliban protest handed over to Iranian diplomats in Pakistan said.

The private news service AIP quoted the Taliban as saying the Iranian armed forces targeted the border towns of Qala-e-Gah and Danabadi in western Afghanistan.

It gave no details of the alleged operation.

Independent confirmation of the report was not immediately available.

The Taliban authorities have warned that such intrusions could

have "serious consequences." They urged Teheran to end the operations immediately, failing which the Taliban would be compelled to take retaliatory measures and "we will not be held responsible for the consequences."

AIP said the Iranians armed with heavy weapons crossed the border on Thursday and repeatedly attacked the Afghan territory. The attacks continued on Sunday night, it said.

Repatiation plan: Iran launched a repatriation programme for Afghan refugees living in the south-eastern province of Sistan-Balochistan bordering Pakistan and Afghanistan, a police official said Monday.

The area is the "key transhipment route for drugs between Afghanistan and Iran," General Nasser Shabani, head of the security for the province, told Iranian state radio.

16 MAY 1999

Taliban barred from attending Geneva moot

TEHRAN: Participants of an international conference in Geneva raised objection to the presence of Taliban's representative in the session, reports Radio Tehran.

The Taliban representative did not attend the meeting and left the venue as it was announced in the meeting that except the legitimate government of Rabbani, no other group has the right to represent Afghanistan in any international meeting.

A source close to the meeting announced that some governments are providing funds to Taliban to enable them participate in international conferences and seminars. The move is aimed at posing Taliban as true representatives of Afghanistan.—NNI

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

Taliban reach airline, gas deals with Turkmenistan

KABUL: Taliban has agreed to several trade pacts with neighbouring Turkmenistan, the first deals with another country the ruling movement has made since coming to power, a news weekly reported on Wednesday.

The agreements included start of commercial flights between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, and the sale of low-priced Turkmen gas to Afghanistan. The Sharqia weekly reported this week in Ashkhabad were made during a visit by Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister Abdur Rahmad Zahid, it said.

Revival of two main power plants in Afghanistan by Turkmen plants and the sale of tar to rebuild Afghan roads were part of the first trade agreements were made with another country since the power in Sept 1996.

The revival of power plants and extension of power cables are where two gas projects of the country are planned.—Reuters

DAWN

13 MAY 1999

DAWN

13 MAY 1999

Afghanistan to buy gas from Turkmenistan

KABUL, May 12: The Taliban movement has made since the first deals with Turkmenistan, the first trade pacts with another country the ruling movement has made since coming to power, a news weekly reported on Wednesday.

The agreements included start of commercial flights between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, and the sale of low-priced Turkmen gas to Afghanistan. The Sharqia weekly reported this week in Ashkhabad during an official visit by Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister Abdur Rahmad Zahid, it said.

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The revival of power plants and extension of power cables are where two gas projects of the country are planned.—Reuters

18 MAY 1999

DAWN 31 MAY 1999

Taliban accuse Tehran of attacking border provinces

ISLAMABAD: Afghanistan's Taliban rulers accused Iran Monday of shelling its western provinces.

According to Taliban officials at the Afghan Embassy in Pakistan, Iranian soldiers fired dozens of shells and heavy artillery into Afghanistan's western Farah province during the weekend. They also hit territory in Herat province, which borders Iran, they said.

There were no reports of casualties and no immediate comment from the Iranian embassy in Islamabad. However, Taliban officials, who asked not to be identified, said a letter of protest was to be delivered later Monday to the Iranian embassy complaining about the attacks.

"So far we have not retaliated," said the Taliban official, who said Iranian troops also had crossed briefly into Afghanistan.

According to the Taliban, the attacks began after last week's capture of central Bamiyan province, the stronghold of Afghanistan's opposition Shi'ite Muslim group Hezb-e-Wahdat.

Relations between the Taliban and Iran have always been uneasy, but in 1998 they plummeted following the killing of seven Iranian diplomats and an Iranian journalist by Taliban troops. The attack occurred during a bloody and violent takeover by the Taliban of northern Mazar-e-Sharif.

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

Taliban deny sending troops to Valley

ISLAMABAD, May 30: The Taliban have refuted the Indian charge that they have infiltrated into held Kashmir.

"We have our own problems in Afghanistan. Further we pursue the policy of non-interference in other's affairs," Taliban ambassador Maulvi Saeed-ur-Rahman Haqqani said here on Sunday. "The Taliban are engaged in the reconstruction of the war-torn Afghanistan and enforcement of Shariah.

They do not want to involve themselves in the affairs of other countries," Mr Haqqani told NNI, when his comments were sought on

New Delhi's accusations.

India has been claiming, since it launched air strikes against Kashmir Mujahideen in the Drass-Kargil sector, that the Taliban have intruded into the Valley.

"The Afghan Islamic Emirate follows the policy of non-interference and expects that no wild accusations would be levelled against it," the envoy said.

He said Indian rulers should not mislead world opinion by dishing out concocted stories, and take advantage of the hostile attitude of the West towards the Taliban.

—NNI

Taliban reject India's claim of intrusion in IHK

ISLAMABAD (NNI) — Afghanistan's ruling Taliban Sunday condemned the Indian accusations that Taliban have infiltrated into held Kashmir and said there is no truth in the claim by Indian officials.

"We are dealing with our own difficulties in Afghanistan and pursuing the policy of non-interference in others affairs," Taliban ambassador Maulvi Saeed-ur-Rahman Haqqani said.

"Taliban are engaged in the reconstruction of the war-torn Afghanistan and enforcement of Islamic Shariah and have no intention to involve in the affairs of other countries," Haqqani told NNI, when his comments were sought about accusations from New Delhi

about Taliban intrusion.

Indian authorities have been claiming since their forces launched air strikes against Kashmir Mujahideen in Drass and Kargil sectors that Afghanistan's Taliban have intruded into the held Valley.

"Afghan Islamic Emirate believes in the policy of non-interference and expect that other countries will avoid wild accusations against our Islamic government," the Taliban envoy said.

He said Indian rulers should not mislead the world opinion by concocted stories and by taking advantage to the hostile attitude towards Taliban within the Western world.

NATION

31 MAY 1999

Mulla Rabbani sympathises with cyclone victims

PESHAWAR (NNI) - Chief of the Taliban Interim council Mulla Muhammad Rabbani has sent messages to President Rafiq Tarar and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif expressing grief concern over the loss of precious human lives in cyclone, reports Bakhtar news agency.

In his messages, Mulla Rabbani expressed sympathy with the bereaved families of the victims, and prayed to Allah Almighty to grant courage and patience to them.

The Taliban Foreign Minister Mulla Muhammad Hassan Akhund in a message to Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz had also expressed grief and sorrow over the calamity and sympathised with the bereaved families.

FRONTIER POST

24 MAY 1999

Taliban, Uzbekistan to hold talks

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Afghanistan dominant Taliban and Uzbekistan will hold high level talks on June 1st when Uzbek Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov will visit Kandahar, diplomatic sources said on Sunday.

Kamilov is arriving in Islamabad today (Monday) on two-day visit and will proceed to Taliban stronghold of Kandahar after concluding his talks with Pakistani officials, the sources told this agency.

The Uzbek Foreign Minister will hold talks with Taliban supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar and other senior leaders of the Islamic militia on bilateral ties focussing on Afghan crisis.

The forthcoming deputy foreign minister level conference of the "Six Plus Two" group in Tashkent, the Uzbek capital, would prominently figure in Omar-Kamilov talks.

Afghan factions would also attend the "six plus two" conference under a decision taken in the recent group's meeting in New York. The group comprises Pakistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, China, Russia and the United States.

DAWN

31 MAY 1999

Labour Day a communist holiday: Taliban

KABUL (AFP) - International Labour Day has gone unnoticed in the Afghan capital, with the Taliban Islamic militia deeming it to be a 'diabolical' communist holiday.

'The communists used the Labour Day in such a manner that we find it disgusting,' a foreign ministry official said.

The Islamic militia has in its ranks many former combatants who fought against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s and until the overthrow of the communist regime of president Najibullah in 1992.

'It is because of these dirty communists that this day cannot be observed,' another official in the ministry said.

People in Kabul went about their daily routine Saturday and one resident said the Taliban consider labour day as an 'atheist, communist holiday' and so 'totally diabolical.'

They had to therefore ban it in the 'pure' Islamic state they were trying to create.

The Taliban, who seized Kabul in 1996, have sought to impose a strict Islamic order based on a fundamentalist interpretation of the Quranic sharia laws.

In the four-fifths of Afghanistan that they control, the Taliban have banned all non-religious holidays including Navroz, the traditional Persian new year, which used to be a major secular festival in the country.

Taliban shun Labour Day calling it 'non-religious'

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— AFP

Two killed in Kabul blast

KABUL, May 5: At least two people were said to have been killed by a large overnight blast that the Taliban blamed on an opposition rocket attack on a military base in a northern suburb of Kabul.

Residents of the area said on Wednesday that Tuesday night's blast also wounded eight people.

Information Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi ruled out internal sabotage and said that the opposition forces had fired a Luna missile "at the instigation of Moscow".

Residents said most of the casualties were civilians.

The site of the explosion, near the Khair Khana pass, is some 25kms from the frontline between the taliban forces and opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood.

Residents living close to the blast site said they were awakened by a loud blast and some said an ammunition depot had exploded.— Reuters

DAWN

06 MAY 1999

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

02 MAY 1999

NATION

02 MAY 1999

03 MAY 1999

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

3 hurt in opposition's rocket blitz on Kabul

Taliban claim repulsing opposition attack in north

KABUL: Afghanistan's northern-based opposition alliance slammed three rockets into the war-wracked capital of Kabul on Sunday, wounding at least three people, witnesses said.

The rockets, apparently aimed at Kabul's combined civil and military airport, hit the northern Qasaba neighborhood, said the witnesses, speaking on condition of anonymity. One rocket landed on a road, while the other two at nearby open ground. Two of the three victims have been critically wounded, doctors said.

Residents said three people — a farmer and two drivers — were wounded. They said they believed the rockets were fired by Masud's troops in the Shamali plain, 25 kilometers north of the capital.

Opposition forces often target the airport from where the Taliban launches air strikes on their rivals in northern and central parts of the country.

Taliban militia, meanwhile, claimed to have repulsed an overnight attack by supporters of opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masud on frontlines north of Kabul.

"They launched an attack last night, which was repulsed," Mulla Abdul Nafe, a Taliban commander on the so-called Old Road front, told reporters. He said the frontlines remained unchanged even though the fighting, in which heavy artillery was used, continued throughout the night. There was no independent confirmation and an opposition spokesman was not available for comment.

The northern frontlines have been quiet for the past few months despite fighting in other parts of the country. Late last month the Hezb-i-Wahdat party, part of Masud's northern alliance, recaptured the central province of Bamiyan from the Taliban after eight months.—AFP/AP

Rockets hit Kabul suburbs, no casualty reported

KABUL: A barrage of opposition rockets rattled northern neighbourhoods of the besieged capital early on Thursday.

There were no immediate reports of casualties, said doctors and witnesses.

At least 12 rockets slammed into neighbourhoods north of the combined military and civilian airport apparently from opposition positions, some 20 kilometres north of the city.

The barrage follows an opposition rocket attack on Wednesday on a military base and ammunition depot in the heart of a congested residential northern neighbourhood of Kabul.

Residents of the area said three major explosions were followed by dozens of smaller ones that caused hundreds of shells and mortars to rain down on homes. A child was killed and several people were injured. Windows were smashed in hundreds of homes.

The northern-based opposition, led by former military chief Ahmed Shah Massood, is battling the Taliban on several fronts all north of the capital.

The Taliban religious army, rules roughly 90 per cent of the country, but fighting has been intense in recent weeks on several fronts, particularly in central Bamyan province and northern Samangan and Baghlan provinces.

Both sides in the conflict are trying to block supply routes. There have been reports from both sides of gains, but it is impossible to independently confirm many of the claims because of the remoteness of the region.

Some areas, particularly mountain passes, change hands regularly.

Meanwhile, the United Nations is pressing both sides to agree to a cease fire, something neither side seems ready to support. Both the Taliban and the opposition have heavily armed and appear dug in for a season of heavy fighting. — AFP

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

07 MAY 1999

Afghanistan opens lines to world phone system

■ First western private investment project in two decades

From Roshan Zamir

■ WASHINGTON-Ultramodern telephone equipment landed at Kabul's airport Friday, launching the first Western private investment project in Afghanistan in two decades and promising to connect this politically and technologically isolated nation to the world of global information and communication.

The project will replace the current telephone system which was installed in the 1950s and has only two international lines and fewer than 10,000 partially working telephones in the entire country of 18 million people.

Afghanistan's international dialing code, 02, has not functioned since before the Soviet invasion, and all calls to and from overseas must be booked through an operator in Peshawar, Pakistan.

Technologically, the country has been devastated. Beginning in 1979, a decade of armed resistance to Soviet occu-

can talk to each other," said Michael Cecil, a British-born telecommunications entrepreneur who is a vice president of the company.

Taliban authorities harbor enormous, and perhaps unrealistic ambitions for the project. In interviews this week, various officials said they hoped it would help bring in more foreign trade and investment, reestablish links with Afghan professionals who fled overseas, bring the Internet to their educational system and improve Afghanistan's image abroad.

"This is like a gate for us," said Communications Minister Tabib Allada, speaking in Pashto through an interpreter as he marveled at a tiny pocket phone that Cecil and his partners had brought to his office. "Our economy is blocked, and our communications are blocked, and every other aspect of our society. Once the gate is open, everything else will open up too."

Downstairs in the dark, empty ministry building, dozens of people have been lining up each day to apply for the promised phone service. Among the most eager are the storefront traders and money changers who keep Af-

Afghanistan's informal economy going.

In some ways, opening up Afghanistan's communications to the world would seem to clash with the Taliban's efforts to cut off what its leaders view as the decadent, libertine culture of the West. After taking power, the Taliban banned television, cassette tapes and all music except recitations of the Quran. While many women in the capital once wore high heels and jeans, they now must be covered in head-to-toe veils while outdoors. But officials insisted that they are not worried about Western culture seeping in through satellite dishes and cell phones. They said they believe it will be possible to separate constructive uses of communication, such as making trade more efficient, from others that do not conform to their Islamic values, such as entertainment.

"This is a Muslim country, and our people are trained for this. They will use it for business news, not for other things," said Ramaullah, an engineer and senior official in the Communications Ministry.

The telephone project also has inherent conflicts with the foreign policies of the United States and most West-

European countries, which have shunned the Taliban regime and protested that it violates human rights by inflicting harsh punishments for crimes and by preventing women from attending school or working.

Links between the Taliban and Saudi exile Osama bin Laden also have had impeded Western investment. Efforts by California-based Unocal Corp. to gain Taliban approval to build an oil pipeline across Afghanistan were dropped last year — one day after a U.S. missile strike against what were described as bin Laden's guerrilla training bases in Afghanistan.

But Cecil and his partners, who include both British and Afghan American businessmen, asserted that they are neither pro- nor anti-Taliban. They said they have been motivated by two aims: to help reconstruct a country that has been virtually destroyed, and to make money in the process. "We are trying to stay out of politics, but I would argue that it makes more sense to engage the Taliban than to ostracize them," said Stuart Bentham, another TSI vice president who traveled here this week.

1 MAY 1999

NATION

NATION

21 MAY 1999

One killed, several hurt as rockets strike Kabul

KABUL (AFP) - One person was killed and several injured when at least 12 rockets slammed into residential areas close to Kabul airport on Thursday, residents and hospital workers said.

The rockets were believed to have been fired by anti-Taliban commander Ahmad Shah Masood's troops in positions around 25 kilometers north of the Afghan capital, they said.

However, most of the rockets exploded within the opposition target, the perimeter of Kabul airport from where the alliance alleges the militia has launched a series of air raids.

'Taliban jets conducted two major attacks on Bagram air base earlier this morning. Full details of damage and casualty number are yet to reach the alliance,' an opposition spokesman told AFP.

Bagram air base lies about 15 kilometers beyond frontlines which ring the northern outskirts of Kabul.

'The rocket attack was launched around 0300 in the morning, waking up the entire area,' Ahmad Zemarai, a local resident said.

A spokesman for the Islamic Taliban militia was unavailable for comment.

The first five rockets, understood to be Russian made BM-21s, were fired during the early hours of Thursday from multi-barrelled missile launchers positioned on mountain tops to the north of Kabul.

A second string of seven rockets shot across the Kabul skies in the early afternoon and as witnesses watched exploded near the airport.

The missile strikes were the worst

since December and came as independent sources said heavy fighting had been reported from Kabul's frontlines and in the south west province Herat.

Alliance commander, General Sayed Husain Anwari said further battles between the Taliban and the alliance were being fought in Dari Suf to the north of central Bamian which was recaptured by the militia on May 9.

Anwari has alleged that a massacre took place of 'hundreds of civilian families' in Bamian and asked the human rights group Amnesty International to investigate.

He said the alliance had repelled a Taliban offensive on the town of Dari Suf which left six Taliban fighters dead and more injured.

'Taliban jets continued to pound alliance positions in the valley causing widespread damage to civilian sectors of the city. Alliance casualties included three dead and the loss of an artillery unit.

'Dari Suf's proximity to the province of Bamian to the south and Balkh to the west has elevated the significance of this valley in light of recent military activity in central as well as north Afghanistan,' he said.

Analysts said fighting among Afghanistan's warring ethnic and religious groups had reached a pitch not seen since October last year.

The Taliban control about 80 percent of the country after a six year civil war with the mujahideen factions who seized power following the collapse of the last Communist government in 1992.

2 killed in opposition rocket attack on Kabul

KABUL: At least two people were killed in an opposition rocket attack on the Afghan capital Kabul on Thursday, residents said.

An eight-year-old boy was one of the two killed by shrapnel from one of more than 15 short-range rockets apparently fired by opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masud's forces dug in some 25 km north of here.

Most of the other rockets hit the Kabul airport, which is used by the Taliban movement's government for combined military and civilian flights.

A civilian had died overnight in opposition missile strikes.

Thursday's rocket attack was the heaviest since September in which several people died and more than

200 were injured.

The attack occurred as fighting escalated on several fronts between the dominant Taliban and the north-based opposition alliance, which controls about one-tenth of the country.

Masud told Reuters that fighting was intense in Laghman, some 120 km east of Kabul, and in the key township of Daraye Souf in the north.

"All I can say is that heavy fighting is going in these two fronts," said Masud when asked if any of the frontlines had changed.

For most of Thursday, Taliban jet fighters took off from Kabul airport apparently to bomb opposition bases.—Reuters

AFGHANISTAN
21 MAY 1999

Explosion rocks Taliban army base

KABUL (AFP) - At least one person was killed and 40 injured when an explosion rocked the Taliban army base in the Afghan capital Kabul early Wednesday, resident and hospital sources said.

Sources said an ammunition container exploded at the base, sited near a hostel for a religious school in north Kabul.

It was not known whether the blast was due to an accident or sabotage. The sources said the container caught fire before the blast.

A 12-year old boy, who did not belong to the school, was killed. Most of the injured were said to be students.

The main military hospital said it had received around 35 wounded, including Taliban militamen. Witnesses said several other injured people were taken to other medical centres.

"It happened when we were all asleep and many students were wounded by flying shrapnel and glass shards," student Abdul Aziz told AFP.

Taliban amputate thieves' hands, Kabul attacked

KABUL (AP) - The right hands of four young men —all convicted thieves - were cut off Friday before a crowd of several hundred people in the Kabul Sports Stadium.

The men sat on the rain-soaked grass, their legs bound by chains and their faces covered with their turbans, while three doctors wearing surgical masks performed the surgery, said eyewitnesses.

The hand of the first man, Mohammed Tahir, was shown to the spectators.

Tahir and Mohammed Gul were found guilty of stealing the equivalent of about dollars 1,000. The other two men, Mohammed Nassem and Bari Elah, were employees of the Taliban's interior ministry, who confessed to breaking into a home and stealing cars and household items.

Earlier Friday nine rockets slammed into Kabul all of them hitting near the combined military and civilian airport. Hospitals in the area said there were no casualties as a result of the rocketing.

FRONTIER POST

26 MAY 1999

FRONTIER POST

22 MAY 1999

Taliban accused of massacring civilians

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL
12 MAY 1999

KABUL: Afghanistan's opposition on Tuesday accused the ruling Taliban of massacring hundreds of civilian families since the militia recaptured Bamiyan city nine days ago.

"Following the fall of Bamiyan city, reports reaching the Alliance high command have confirmed the massacres of hundreds of innocent civilian families," senior opposition commander General Sayed Husain Anwari said. Independent sources said they could not confirm whether the recent battles in Bamiyan had turned into a massacre of civilians.

But they said rumours of a massacre had escalated in Kabul during recent days and they were able to confirm other claims including the systemic razing of civilian homes.

Anwari said residential houses in the central Afghan city had been burned to the ground and a 'terror campaign' against ethnic Hazaras had been extended to neighbouring Yakawlang and surrounding districts.

"We're getting rumours more and more each day of a massacre," one Western aid worker said.

Another European aid worker said

"we know the houses were burnt and there are a lot of differences between the Taliban who are ethnic Pashtoon and the Hazaras who populate Bamiyan."

"In Afghanistan the average size of a family is six and if this massacre occurred then this could mean that thousands more have perished," he said. The European aid worker was referring to reports by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch who have said the Taliban massacred between 3,000 and 8,000 Hazaras at northern Mazar-i-Sharif last August.

Anwari said the massacre at Bamiyan prompted many locals to take refuge in the surrounding mountains where extremely cold weather claimed more lives.

"Fighting has now reached west Bamiyan, where the Taliban have shown little hesitancy in extending the terror campaign to Yakawlang and surrounding regions," he said.

Independent sources confirmed that Yakawlang fell under Taliban control late last week.

Taliban spokesman was not available for comment.—AFP

Afghan opposition urges HR groups probe

KABUL, May 19: A senior Afghan opposition commander on Wednesday urged international human rights groups to investigate his allegations of a massacre in central Bamiyan city after it fell to the Taliban.

General Sayed Husain Anwari said a report by human rights watchdogs such as Amnesty International into the allegation would have an impact and could "curb the rage of the Taliban."

"But for the people, even if Amnesty intervenes, they still cannot trust the Taliban and return to their homes in Bamiyan," he said.

Anwari alleged the militia massacred "hundreds of innocent civilian families," razed their homes and extended a "terror campaign" in Bamiyan against ethnic Hazaras to neighbouring Yakawlang and surrounding districts.

He said the massacre began immediately after the militia recaptured Bamiyan on May 9.

"In the initial stage of their entry to Bamiyan they committed this crime. But now they don't have access to the locals who have fled to the mountains. The majority have left Bamiyan," he said.

"We cannot yet give a precise figure. Our investigation is in progress. We will come to you with more details."

A senior Taliban spokesman declined to comment but independent sources in Pakistan and Afghanistan said reports were emerging that civilians were killed in Bamiyan after the Taliban moved in.

"But how many were killed and how, we really do not know," one western source said.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have previously investigated alleged massacres in Afghanistan.

Pitched battles had been fought around Bamiyan ahead of its May 9 capture.—AFP

Tripartite meeting to discuss Afghans' repatriation

By Ismail Khan

PESHAWAR: The federal government is convening a meeting of the tripartite commission of Pakistan, Afghanistan and the UNHCR sometime this month to expedite the repatriation of an estimated three million Afghan refugees back to their homeland.

"We intend to revive the commission to find ways on how best to proceed about it", a senior federal government official told The News. The tripartite commission on repatriation of Afghan refugees to Afghanistan last held its meeting in October 1995. It has since then been dormant despite frequent requests from the Taliban administration to Pakistan to encourage the return of refugees to areas under their control. The official said that the Taliban's minister for refugee repatriation had met with the federal government officials and raised the matter of reviving the tripartite commission.

The official said that the Ministry of State And Frontier Regions (SAFRON) was writing letters to the other two members of the commission namely the ruling Taliban and the UNHCR to submit their points for

the agenda of the meeting expected to take place sometimes this month. The meeting was most likely to take place in Peshawar, the official said, adding that it would give an added dimension to the repatriation issue since the NWFP alone was playing host to an estimated 1.2 million Afghan refugees.

The UNHCR last week raised alarm bells by announcing that it faced its worst funding crisis for its Afghanistan programme during 1998 while the outlook for 1999 was already bleak. A report said that by October 1998, funding for refugee repatriation and re-integration had virtually dried up altogether, forcing the UNHCR to slash its projects inside Afghanistan beside having troubles paying its staff there. "We have told the refugees that we cannot promise them re-integration projects in the social sector inside Afghanistan," a UNHCR official in Peshawar said. One indication that the repatriation of refugees to Afghanistan is slowing down because of the difficulties faced by the UNHCR inside Afghanistan is evident from the fact that 7,917 refugees returned home till April 1999 against repatriation of 11,502 refugees dur-

ing the corresponding period last year.

Senior government officials agree that the time had come for Pakistan to encourage the repatriation of refugees back to Afghanistan as international funding and assistance continue to register a nose down towards a virtual halt. "There is no denying the fact that the refugees should now go back but it has to be in a systematic manner," a senior official said.

The NWFP Chief Minister Sardar Mahtab Ahmad Khan ordered confinement of Afghan refugees to the camps by March 15 last month but later withdrew the decision in the face of strong concern shown from by UNHCR and scepticism from its own officials. The UN is learnt to have taken up the issue with Islamabad.

Officials here said that the best course for Pakistan would be to encourage refugees from eastern, southern and central Afghanistan who constituted 78 per cent of the total refugee population. "Under the Geneva Protocol, Pakistan cannot force repatriation of the refugees. It has to be voluntary, purely on the sweet will of the refugees," the official said.

188 Afghan families evacuated

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR May 17: As many as 188 Afghan families were evacuated from Nasir Bagh refugees tentage village on Monday and transported in 55 trucks across the border into Afghanistan.

The evacuation of Afghan refugees was carried out jointly by the Afghan refugees commissionerate staff and the district administration.

The land of Nasir Bagh tentage village has been part of government's Regi Lalma Township scheme and ejection of Afghan refugees and shifting them to other camps has been continuing.

The provincial government has already instructed the commission-

er of Afghan refugees to double the endeavour for the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees and restrain them to their nearest tentage villages.

The presence of about half a million unregistered Afghan refugees in the provincial metropolis apart from 1.2 million registered refugees has created multifarious social economic and infrastructural problems for the local people and the government planners as well.

The government is also keeping a vigil eye on the re-entering of those Afghan refugees who have availed the special package by the UNHCR and the border security has been tightened.

Two million Afghan refugees repatriated, says Majid

ISLAMABAD (APP)—Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas Lt General (Retd) Majid Malik said that more than two million Afghan Refugees have been repatriated from NWFP and Baluchistan upto March 31, this year.

Responding to a question, the Minister said 1,589,077 refugees were repatriated from NWFP and 499,808 from Baluchistan.

Giving the details of the procedure for repatriation, the Minister said the government has set up a commission under a tripartite policy regarding the repatriation of Afghan Refugees to Afghanistan which meets every two months to review the situation regarding their repatriation.

He said all possible efforts are underway in collaboration with NGOs and the government of Afghanistan for repatriation of the Refugees according to international obligations.

Majid Malik said that Pakistan provides shelter to the highest number of Afghan refugees which were more than 3.5 million during the Afghan war and now were being repatriated under a well planned policy because a number of difficulties including presence of land mines and non-availability of food.

He made a clear cut statement on the floor of the House that Afghan refugees are not allowed to get identity cards and purchase property in Pakistan.

When asked about the total figure of Afghan refugees, he said that according

to the government figure this time only 1.5 million Afghan Refugees are still in Pakistan and others have been repatriated.

According to official list of refugees, he said 8,71063 refugees are in NWFP, 3,31000 in Balochistan and only 1,32000 in Punjab besides 1,11000 in different agencies located on the border area of Pakistan .

The NWFP government has introduced a performa in the province to collect complete data of Afghan refugees.

PPI adds—The Minister said the government has also provided sufficient funds to the army to build concrete shelters to save the refugees from the scorching fire of the Indian army.

To a question, the Minister said the government is paying full attention to the development projects of Azad Kashmir adding that AJK government has been asked to explore the potential of hydel power projects.

The electricity from these projects will not only be used in Kashmir but also be sold to Punjab, he added. "Funds of seventy million rupees have been provided to them for this purpose," he added. The Minister said the present government is also giving special importance to the development of Northern Areas and has allocated sufficient funds for education, health and other development works in that areas. The Minister said the Northern Areas have great potential in hydel and tourism sectors and in a few years these areas will witness a revolutionary change, adding, various international agencies

are giving development funds for the progress and prosperity of these areas."

He said that the complaints of load-shedding in Northern Areas would certainly be redressed before the next winter in these areas."

The government in cooperation with the United Nations is also examining plans to promote food processing in the Northern Areas," the Minister added.

To another question, Majeed Malik said, "contrary to some misconceptions the people of Tribal Areas are very patriotic and peace-loving and after independence of Pakistan have always stood as the defenders of its borders."

The Minister, however, said, "There is a need to bring in reforms in the present FC rules .

About the Kashmir issue, Majid Malik said the world leaders now recognise Kashmir as a core issue and have termed it disputed territory and said that implementation of UN resolutions are essential for permanent peace in South Asia.

"Bill Clinton, Nelson Mandela, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and Tony Blair now recognise the issue and "flash-point" and realise that without the solution of this issue no durable peace can be achieved in South Asia," he added.

He said during the past two years Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif kept the Kashmir issue on top of his agenda and took it to all important international fora particularly the United Nations, SAARC and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

Majid Malik said after the nuclear explosions of May 98 the Kashmir issue got a new lease of life.

NATION

20 MAY 2001

21 MAY 1999

Admn asked to restrict Afghan refugees to camps

F.P. Report

MANSEHRA - The traders and shopkeepers associations of Mansehra have hurled an ultimatum that if the Afghan refugees were not restricted to their camps within 15 days, the local administration will be responsible for any sorts of law and order situation.

A joint meeting of the Markazi anjuman-e-Tajran, the shopkeepers and the butchers association held here on Saturday at a local hotel, which was addressed by Malik Sajjad president and Sadiq Saraf, general secretary of the Markazi Anjuman-e-Tajran, Abdul Waheed, general secretary of the Butchers Association and the shopkeepers representatives Soofi Gohar Aman and Muhammad Zakrya.

The speakers said for the last 21 years they had been hosting these Afghan brothers, but in turn they had given them the gifts of heroin and klashinkov culture besides incurring heavy loss to their businesses.

They said that the Afghan refugees had occupied all positions right from the humblest jobs to business and transport rendering the local people jobless who pay heavy taxes to the state. The Anjuman-e-

Tajran representatives came hard down on the local administration for dispossessing the local people of their small businesses, whose children according to them were starving to death.

Soofi Gohar, claimed that a number of Afghan refugees had managed to get Pakistani national identity cards and had purchased huge properties. "Our sons despite working in overseas countries cannot purchase even a single inch of land but the Afghan refugees besides purchasing property are openly running the lucrative business of electronics and the contraband items," he said.

He maintained that the Afghan refugees were doing all that on the black money earned through the heroin and other drugs and the illegal business of arms.

A unanimous resolution was adopted in the meeting warning that if Afghan refugees were not restricted to their camps within 15 days, the local administration would itself be responsible for the consequences.

The resolution also demanded immediate transfer of Assistant Commissioner Mansehra, Mahmood Kharal.

FRONTIER POST

16 MAY 1999

PDA continues to demolish Afghan refugees' houses

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar Development Authority (PDA) operation to demolish the houses of Afghan refugees in the Nasirbagh camp on the outskirts of Peshawar to vacate land for its Regi Lalma housing project is continuing amid a hue and cry by the displaced persons.

The refugees whose houses are being vacated and demolished are shifted to the Akora Khattak camp in Nowshera. But many Afghan refugees are not interested in settling in that camp and are either finding room in other refugee camps or staying with relations and friends. "Out of the 196 families who were shifted to Akora Khattak, only about 100 still remain there and the remaining have gone their own way. They are all complaining of lack of basic facilities at the place selected for their resettlement," said a teacher, Hazrat Akbar Wafadar.

Some of the Afghan refugee families were also reported to have left for Afghanistan instead of taking up residence in the Akora Khattak camp. It may be mentioned that many Afghan refugees shift to Afghanistan during the summers because the climate there is much cooler than Pakistan. In any case, most refugees want to stay in or near Peshawar where they can easily make a living compared to rural places like Akora Khattak.

It was learnt that the house of Bibi Hanifa, an educated Afghan woman, had also been demolished. Some Afghan refugees claimed her house was not earmarked for demolition in the original plan but she was punished for speaking for the rights of her fellow countrymen.

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

UN plans to send staff to Badakhshan

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - The United Nations plans to send a team of its international staff to Badakhshan shortly to monitor relief activities in the northern province, a UN spokesperson said on Friday.

The team will stay in Faizabad and will hold meetings with the local UN staff and Non-Governmental Organisations about the relief operation, Stephannie Bunker told reporters at weekly press briefing at the UN Information centre. A number of teams of the UN international staff have visited Kabul, Jalalabad and Kandahar as part of its

drive to assess relief operations in the war-devastated country.

All UN international workers were pulled out of Afghanistan in August last year following killings of three UN staff, two local workers and the third was an Italian military official.

Bunker hinted that the UN also intends to send international staff to the central province of Bamiyan and northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif shortly.

In October last year the United Nations and Taliban inked a security agreement for the return of the UN international staff. The agreement had bound the ruling Taliban to provide protection to the UN staff, its premises and investigate into the killing of the 3 UN staff members. In March, the UN announced plans to gradually send humanitarian workers back to Afghanistan after reaching an agreement with Taliban to ensure safety and security of the UN international and national staff.

The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said last month that he would consider withdrawal of the UN staff from Afghanistan for the second time if Taliban leadership does not ensure security to them. He issued the warning in a report on Afghanistan to the UN Security Council and General Assembly. Taliban, he said, must fulfil its commitments to ensure the security of UN staff in Afghanistan and if they failed to keep this commitment, he would consider withdrawing UN staff from the country.

UN officials emphasise that Taliban must fulfil their commitments they have made concerning the security of UN staff. Unless there is clear evidence that all the commitments made by the Taliban regarding security have been carried out, UN would be compelled to review its decision about the return of international staff of Afghanistan, he warned.

UNICEF calls upon Afghan factions to stop fighting

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - In connection with its immunisation programme in all over Afghanistan, the UNICEF has called upon both Taliban and the Northern Alliance to declare a ceasefire and enable the medical staffers and volunteers to complete their assignments.

The Taliban representatives in Peshawar have confirmed to have got a plea from the UNICEF for a ceasefire for a period of three days. The UNICEF is going to start the immunisation campaign on May 9 and it will be completed on May 11 next.

The UNICEF Immunisation campaign for 1999 will cover the children all over Afghanistan and for this pur-

pose it enjoys support of the health ministries, social workers, NGO's and elites of the area. So far, the UNICEF offices from Jalalabad, Kabul, Kandahar, Mazar-i-Sharif, Herat, Faizabad and others are busy in shifting of instruments and vaccines to each and every part of Afghanistan. The UNICEF is also planning to send teams from its Islamabad, Peshawar and Quetta offices to help their colleagues in the campaign. A number of journalists from Islamabad and Peshawar were also approached for accompanying the UNICEF teams to various parts of Afghanistan. The visa applications of the journalists are lying with the Afghan embassy in Islamabad.

NATION 06 MAY 1999

NATION
08 MAY 1999

Former Afghan Minister backs Zahir Shah plan

Pakistan urged to initiate sincere efforts on Afghanistan

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR – Former Afghan Minister and moderate leader Syed Ishaq Gillani has said that Pakistan enjoys a key role in affairs of Afghanistan therefore it should initiate sincere efforts on Afghanistan.

"We believe that without support of Pakistan a negotiated solution to the issue will remain a far cry," he this remarked in an interview. He further said that whenever Pakistan initiated practical steps the problem was resolved within days. Elaborating his point of view, Ishaq Gillani recalled that several years ago, Pakistan with extending an invitation to Sardar Abdul Wali Khan, had initiated a drive to resolve the conflict and now when former King Mohammad Zahir Shah had announced a formula, therefore, Pakistan needed to extend its fullest support.

In response to a question, Ishaq Gillani who remained President of the Council for Understanding and National Unity of Afghanistan for two consecutive terms said "key to a negotiated solution of the Afghan conflict rests with Pakistan." He viewed that with the establishment of a friendly government in Afghanistan, Pakistan could ensure protection to its interests for a long time

in the region. Similarly, he added that with the establishment of a friendly government according to wishes of war-affected Afghans, Pakistan could also utilise the economic opportunities in the whole region.

He said that the policy makers of Pakistan need to help the peace loving and patriotic Afghans in their efforts for pulling their motherland out of the existing crises.

Syed Ishaq Gillani who has been playing a neutral role in Afghan politics when the *jehadic* factions entered into in-fighting with each other in 1992, said that uncertain situation of Afghanistan could affect the regional and neighbouring countries. In such circumstances, Afghanistan would prove a safe haven for the criminal elements, drug-traffickers and producers who would destroy peace as well as law and order situation of the whole region.

Similarly, he added that uncertain situation of Afghanistan would become a golden opportunity for the terrorists. Keeping in view, impacts of the uncertain situation of Afghanistan on the regional countries, Pakistan needs to take early steps for finding out a negotiated solution to the conflict.

He further said that Pakistan and its people had extended unforgettable hos-

pitality and support to the Afghans and as a result of such support, the Afghans were enabled to throw out the Red Army. He was of the firm belief that keeping in view the 20-years long hospitality, it is impossible for the Afghans to indulge themselves in such acts which is either harmful to interests of Pakistan. He further said that 20-year long fighting in Afghanistan had provided an opportunity to people of both Pakistan and Afghanistan to restore their relations.

Ishaq Gillani said that now when former King Mohammad Zahir Shah had unveiled a comprehensive plan for resolving the conflict, Pakistan needs to take practical steps. Explaining his point, Gillani said that like Sardar Wali, Pakistan needs to extend an invitation to the former King for visiting Pakistan not only for discussing such a formula with Afghans but also for its implementation.

Answering to a question, Gillani said that Mohammad Zahir Shah had insisted on convening a meeting of the traditional *loya jirga*, therefore, an Afghan province must be declared a peace zone. He said that in such a province, the meeting of the *loya jirga* should be held under the direct supervision of United Nations.

NATION 31 MAY 1989

Zahir Shah has guts to lead Afghans

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR – Pir Syed Ahmad Gillani, Chief of the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan has said that former king Mohammad Zahir Shah is sincere in his efforts aimed at a negotiated solution to the long awaited conflict. He has the guts to lead the Afghan nation.

Talking to the newsmen at Hayatabad Peshawar on Sunday, Pir Syed Ahmad Gillani said he held a detailed meeting with former King Mohammad Zahir Shah in Rome, Italy and found him in good health. He said that although Mohammad Zahir Shah had become an aged person but he had the potential to lead the Afghans. He dispelled the impression that Zahir Shah couldn't lead the Afghan nation at this stage.

Pir Syed Ahmad Gillani said Zahir Shah is determined to initiate practical steps for resolving the conflict. He said that Zahir Shah favours that Afghans should sit across a table for deciding future of their motherland. For this purpose, he insisted on an early meeting of a loya jirga where the Afghan elites should go for formation of an elected government without foreign pressure and interferences. He was of the firm belief that through such steps, the Afghans could be in a better position to pull Afghanistan out of existing situation.

In response to a question, Pir Syed Ahmad Gillani said that as a result of talks with Mohammad Zahir Shah and

his supporters, he came to know that Mohammad Zahir Shah was planning to first assemble like-minded Afghans and his supporters on one forum for the initiate practical struggle for pulling Afghanistan and its people out of existing situation.

PPP leader urges trials to get united

Arbab Khizar Hayat, an active leader of opposition Pakistan Peoples Party has urged the tribesmen from all over the belt to forge unity among their ranks.

"Now the Mohmand tribesmen are facing severe crisis in the wake of unjustful decisions of the NWFP government and tomorrow the tribesmen from the remaining area can face such a situation," he remarked while addressing the affected tribesmen at Zarif Korona of the defective areas on Sunday. Arbab Khizar Hayat along with several of PPP stalwarts, succeeded in making it to the villages. Arbab Khizar became the first one of political stalwarts who entered the area.

Expressing his concern over the inhuman action against innocent tribesmen, Arbab Khizar Hayat announced to stage a demonstration on June five next. In this connection, he said that workers and stalwarts of PPP Workers Ittehad from all over the province would assemble in the defective villages. Arbab Khizar Hayat after coming to know about the inhuman action against tribal women and children, said that it could be considered a joke with those tribesmen who have rendered tremendous sacrifices in the independence movement.

Proposals for Afghan peace

From Shamim Bano

PESHAWAR – Former Afghan president Professor Sibgatullah Mujaddi and Pir Syed Ahmed Gilani has welcomed the peace proposal announced by the king of Afghanistan for the lasting peace in Afghanistan the association for peace and national unity of Afghanistan (APNU) extended its support the timely proposal by former monarch Zahir Shah by convening loya jirga

APNU urges UN, OIC and world

powers in particlar the government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Iran to extend a helping hand inconvening a traditional time tested loya jirga being a vital and long standing demand of the people of afghanistan.

It also urges the warring factions of Afghanistan to put an end to fractional warfare and accept the proposal put forth by the former monarch

Worth mentioning here is that former king of Afghanistan gave a peace proposal for the Afghanistan peace.

NATION 06 MAY 1989

Monitoring relief activities **UN staff arrives**

PESHAWAR (NNI) - An 11-member team of UN international staff arrived in Afghanistan's eastern city of Jalalabad on Sunday to monitor relief activities there, UN spokesperson said. The team will stay in Jalalabad, capital of Ningrahar province

Capital of Mongolia
May 5, and will hold meetings
with the local UN staff and Non-
governmental Organizations
about the relief operation,
Stephanie Bunker told NNI.
All UN international workers
were pulled out of the Afghanistan
August last year following the
killings of three UN staff, two lo-
cal workers and the third was an
international and national staff.

The UN Secretary General
Kofi Annan said last week that he
would consider withdrawal of the
UN staff from Afghanistan for the
second time if Taliban leadership
does not ensure security to them.
He issued the warning in a re-
port on Afghanistan to the UN
Security Council and General
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Afghan military official. An 8-member UN international staff returned from Taliban's stronghold of Kandahar last week after they reviewed relief activities in this southern Afghan town. The UN staff will fulfill its commitments to ensure the security of UN staff in Afghanistan and if they failed to keep this commitment, he would consider withdrawing UN staff from the country.

In October last year the United Nations and 'Taliban inked a security agreement for the return of the UN international staff. The agreement had bound the ruling Taliban to provide protection to UN staff, its premises and investigate into the killing of the 3

Bunker hinted that the UN also wanted to send international staff to the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif shortly.

A UN spokesman emphasized that 'Taliban must fulfill their commitments they have made concerning the security of UN staff. Unless there is clear evidence that all the commitments made by the Taliban regarding security have been carried out, UN would be compelled to review its decision about the return of international staff of Afghanistan, he warned.

FRONTIER POST, 10 MAY, 1889

UN international staff arrives in Jalalabad

ISLAMABAD (NNI) – An 11-member team of UN international staff arrived in Afghanistan's eastern city of Jalalabad on Sunday to monitor relief activities there, UN spokesperson said. "The team will stay in Jalalabad, the capital of Ningrahar province till May 15, 2002," he said. In March, the UN announced plans to gradually send humanitarian workers back to Afghanistan after reaching an agreement with Taliban to ensure safety and security of the UN international and national staff.

The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said last week that he would consider withdrawal of the UN staff from Afghanistan for the second time if Taliban leaders do not allow the UN to hold meetings with the local UN staff and Non-Governmental Organizations about the relief operation, Stephanie Bunker told NNI.

All UN international workers were pulled out of Afghanistan in August last year following the killings of three UN staff, two local workers and the third was an Italian military official. Taliban leadership does not ensure security to them. He issued the warning in a report on Afghanistan to the UN Security Council and General Assembly. Taliban, he

An 8-member UN international staff returned from Taliban's stronghold of Kandahar last week after they reviewed relief activities in this southern Afghan town.

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NATION 03 MAY 1999

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NATION 03 MAY 1999

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NATION

04 MAY 1999

UN, OIC urged to adopt Zahir Shah plan

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR — While expressing his grave concern over renewed fighting and bloodshed in Afghanistan, Secretary of the Great National United Islamic Front, Shehzada Masud has suggested the UN, OIC, USA and other organisations and countries to back the recent formula of former king Zahir Shah.

Talking to *The Nation*, Shehzada Masud said Monday that now when the warring factions are consolidating their positions for initiating the Summer fighting against each other, therefore, responsibility rests with the UN, OIC, USA and others to fulfil their responsibilities.

In this connection, he said that the previous seven years experience had proved that all of the factions had been engaged in internal fighting and are reluctant to let the mediators find out a negotiated solution

to the conflict.

Shehzada Masud said that all the warring factions are being engaged in internal fighting at the behest of their foreign financers and patronisers. Such foreign forces according to him are engaged in a proxy war in Afghanistan.

Advocating in favour of ex-King Zahir Shah's recent proposals for a political solution to the issue, he said that it reflects wishes of the silent majority who was disheartened of 20-years long fighting and confrontation in their motherland.

He added that Zahir Shah, through his recent proposals, has provided a comprehensive plan to UN, OIC and other big forces and organisations for resolving the issue.

Shehzada Masud also called upon Afghans to support the peace proposals of former King Mohammad Zahir Shah.

UNIC briefing on immunisation drive in Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD: The mass immunisation campaign against poliomyelitis in war-torn Afghanistan will feature in this week's press briefing at the United Nations Information Centre.

Representatives of UNICEF and WHO for Afghanistan, Louis-Georges Arsenault and Dr. Mohamed Abdi Jama, will jointly provide a glimpse into the challenges of organising the nationwide immunisation campaign in such a volatile situation, says a press release.

The 1999 campaign is to be carried out by UNICEF and WHO in two rounds; the first round beginning on May 9, while the second in mid-June, involving 91,000 volunteers and health workers in Afghanistan. This year, during the sixth national immunization days (NIDs), about 4.3 million children under the age of five are to be vaccinated all over Afghanistan.

UNOCHA Spokesperson Stephanie Bunker will be available to answer any question relating to the UN humanitarian activities in Afghanistan.

The press briefing will be held today (Friday at the UNIC, House no. 26, Street 88, G-6/3, at 11 a.m.)

Immunisation Day in Afghanistan

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR — First phase of national Immunisation Day is to begin in Afghanistan on May 9, states the United Nations weekly update issued here on Tuesday.

The campaign is a cooperative effort between UNICEF, WHO, local ministries and health officials. In central region alone, 4,000 coordinators, supervisors, social mobilisers and volunteers and 148 vehicles will be involved in the campaign. It further states that training of personnel is going on in central region, while coordination and planning meetings were held in Ghazni, Southern Region, Western region and Faizabad.

According to the report, WHO in collaboration with MoPH and UNICEF has completed the second round of EPI

acceleration in three provincial capitals in Herat, Farah and Badghis provinces. A three-day refresher training course on immunisation was conducted in Herat, regional hospital, which was attended by 12 trainers from Herat, Badghis and Farah provinces.

Meanwhile, 112 Afghan families have left Pakistan and arrived in Kabul and Logar provinces of Afghanistan. These refugees have left the tent villages of Darsamand and Turpul in NWFP.

Earlier, in the current spring some 339 families from Karachi and Baluchistan have been repatriated in Southern provinces of Afghanistan. In the current spring, thousands of Afghans families from both Pakistan and Iran are expected to go back to Afghanistan.

So far, the UNHCR reports that a huge 2.6 million Afghan refugees are still residing in Pakistan and Iran.

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05 MAY 1999

UN plans to send staff to Badakhshan

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - The United Nations plans to send a team of its international staff to Badakhshan shortly to monitor relief activities in the northern province, a UN spokesperson said on Friday.

The team will stay in Faizabad and will hold meetings with the local UN staff and Non-Governmental Organisations about the relief operation, Stephanie Bunker told reporters at weekly press briefing at the UN Information centre. A number of teams of the UN international staff have visited Kabul, Jalalabad and Kandahar as part of its

drive to assess relief operations in the war-devastated country.

All UN international workers were pulled out of Afghanistan in August last year following killings of three UN staff, two local workers and the third was an Italian military official.

Bunker hinted that the UN also intends to send international staff to the central province of Bamyan and northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif shortly.

In October last year the United Nations and Taliban inked a security agreement for the return of the UN international staff. The agreement had bound the ruling Taliban to provide protection to the UN staff, its premises and investigate into the killing of the 3 UN staff members. In March, the UN announced plans to gradually send humanitarian workers back to Afghanistan after reaching an agreement with Taliban to ensure safety and security of the UN international and national staff.

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UN officials emphasise that Taliban must fulfil their commitments they have made concerning the security of UN staff. Unless there is clear evidence that all the commitments made by the Taliban regarding security have been carried out, UN would be compelled to review its decision about the return of international staff of Afghanistan, he warned.

UNICEF calls upon Afghan factions to stop fighting

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - In connection with its immunisation programme in all over Afghanistan, the UNICEF has called upon both Taliban and the Northern Alliance to declare a ceasefire and enable the medical staffers and volunteers to complete their assignments.

The Taliban representatives in Peshawar have confirmed to have got a plea from the UNICEF for a ceasefire for a period of three days. The UNICEF is going to start the immunisation campaign on May 9 and it will be completed on May 11 next.

The UNICEF Immunisation campaign for 1999 will cover the children all over Afghanistan and for this pur-

pose it enjoys support of the health ministries, social workers, NGO's and elites of the area. So far, the UNICEF offices from Jalalabad, Kabul, Kandahar, Mazar-i-Sharif, Herat, Faizabad and others are busy in shifting of instruments and vaccines to each and every part of Afghanistan. The UNICEF is also planning to send teams from its Islamabad, Peshawar and Quetta offices to help their colleagues in the campaign. A number of journalists from Islamabad and Peshawar were also approached for accompanying the UNICEF teams to various parts of Afghanistan. The visa applications of the journalists are lying with the Afghan embassy in Islamabad.

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FRONTIER POST 08 MAY 1999

UN asks Afghan rivals to observe truce

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - The United Nations on Friday urged the warring sides in Afghanistan to observe a ceasefire during a forthcoming polio immunization campaign in the country.

The campaign, involving 19,000 volunteers and health workers, will be carried out from May 9 to 11 by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

All 4.3 Afghan children under five years are targeted in the program, with a second round of vaccination scheduled for May 13-15, a UNICEF statement said.

Negotiations have been held with the Taliban authorities and the opposition northern alliance to observe a truce for both rounds, it said.

Polio is still endemic in Afghanistan and so far 85 polio cases have been detected by a surveillance system which has been functioning since late 1997 despite the conflict in the country, the statement said.

NNI adds: The Afghan opposition alliance troops have consolidated their gains in the north of Kabul by launching fresh offensives on the capital city of Kabul, a top military commander said Friday.

The offensives have been

launched from the districts of Guldara, Guzar, Sarrak-i-Nau and Sarrak-i-Kohna, General Sayed Hussain Anwari, Chief Military Commander Harrakat-e-Islami Afghanistan told this news agency from Takhar.

General Anwari said the alliance armies have succeeded in pushing back the Taliban in numerous districts.

The Taliban's most severe setback occurred in Shakar Darra, where a prominent Taliban commander, Anwar Khan and his troops were dealt with a heavy blow and forced to retreat from the district.

Another reports Afghan opposition has set up a commission to decide the formation of a new cabinet and prime minister.

The Leadership Council which went into session with Professor Rabbani in the chair in Kapisa province held threadbare discussions on current political and military situation in the country.

According to a message faxed to this news agency by the opposition commander General Syed Hussein Anwari from Afghanistan, the council agreed to adopt a conciliatory tone towards the Taliban and give priority to peaceful means for the settlement of Afghan conflict.

Afghans asked to observe truce for polio drive

ISLAMABAD, May 7: The United Nations on Friday urged the warring sides in Afghanistan to observe ceasefire during the forthcoming polio immunization campaign.

The campaign, involving 19,000 volunteers and health workers, will be carried out from May 9 to 11 by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

All 4.3 million Afghan children under five years are targeted in the programme, with a second round of vaccination scheduled for May 13-15, a UNICEF statement said.

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DAWN

08 MAY 1999

Anti-polio drive in Afghanistan

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: First round of National Immunization Days (NIDs) against polio will be carried out from May 9-11 in Afghanistan under the auspices of UNICEF, WHO and the ministry of public health.

This important campaign will involve over 19,000 volunteers, health workers and social mobilisers.

All 4.3 million Afghan children under five years of age are targeted in both rounds for this year polio vaccination campaign. In addition, about 3.6 million children between 1-5 years are expected to benefit from vi-

tamin A supplementation during the second round from June 13-15.

Much progress has been made for reducing the number of polio cases globally from 35,251 in 1988 to 3000 in 1998. Polio is still endemic in Afghanistan. A surveillance system was established in September 1997, which continues to function despite the ongoing conflict and complex situation inside Afghanistan. So far, 85 cases of confirmed polio have been detected.

Mass immunization campaigns and NIDs have been conducted in Afghanistan since 1994. Every year, days of tranquillity have been negoti-

ated by the UN with all side in the conflict so that more children could be administered oral polio vaccine (OPV). In 1998, vaccination was provided in Bamyan through such negotiations, but the northern region was not reached.

This campaign is part of the ongoing global commitment to eradicate polio by the end of this century. Provisions are being made for an intensified effort on 1999 and 2000 — with another set of NIDs later this year and two sets scheduled for May/June and October/November in 2000 — to attain polio eradication in Afghanistan.

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

08 MAY 1999

Afghan opposition blames Taliban for Hazaras 'massacre'

KABUL (AFP) - Afghanistan's opposition Saturday urged the United Nations to investigate alleged massacres of minority ethnic Hazaras following a bloody crackdown on dissent by the ruling Taliban.

An opposition spokesman told AFP UN Special Rapporteur Karmal Hussein has been asked to 'launch an immediate investigation of these crimes against humanity.'

'The Northern Alliance is now cooperating with a number of human rights organisations in shedding further light, on atrocities committed by the Taliban, in both Bamiyan and Herat,' the spokesman said.

Amnesty International has already confirmed it is probing the alleged deaths of 'hundreds of civilian families' at Bamiyan in central Afghanistan after it was recaptured by the militia on May 9.

Afghan, Pakistan and independent western sources have confirmed some indiscriminate killings and the razing of at least 250 homes in Bamiyan following pitched battles for control of the city.

The Taliban have declined to comment on the claims but have announced a successful crackdown on a rebellion in Herat which the militia claims was supported by neighbouring Iran.

Witnesses said up to 25 bodies were strung by their feet in Herat's centre as a warning to other potential rebels.

The Taliban has told Iran to stop meddling in Afghan affairs.

'Members of the group were not Hazaras alone, there were other people among them too in the plot organised by Iran. Such plots will be quashed in future as well,' a militia spokesman said in an official Radio Shariat broadcast.

'The vigilant security forces in Herat acted timely, killing and arresting the plotters, the plot was nipped in the bud. One hundred and thirty heavy and light arms and quantities of ammunition supplied by Iran were seized,' it said.

Amnesty International investigated alleged massacres in Afghanistan last August and concluded the Taliban, who consist mainly of ethnic Pashtoon, had massacred up to 3,000 Hazaras in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif.

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Other estimates put the figure as high as 8,000. The Taliban has rejected the claims. Bamiyan and Herat also have large Hazara populations.

Alliance commander General Sayed Hussain Anwari said the UN's presence in Afghanistan could enhance its ability to complete an inquiry into the alleged atrocities at Herat and Bamiyan.

He was referring to a UN evacuation of Afghanistan in August last year at about the same time the massacres at Mazar-i-Sharif took place.

The evacuation was prompted by security issues and the UN returned in March.

Afghan opposition agrees to polio truce

KABUL (AFP) - Afghanistan's opposition northern alliance Saturday said it agreed in principle to a proposed ceasefire which would allow the United Nations to undertake a polio vaccination project.

He said an agreement was struck with the UN to allow inoculations to begin on all Afghan children under the age of five and to take place in two phases on May 9-11 and June 1-3.

"If they ask us, in principle we agree because this is a humane issue," Abdullah said.

"We will do our best, people's health is their natural right".

The northern alliance is battling the hardline Islamic Taliban militia, which controls more than 80 percent of the country.

FRONTIER POST

09 MAY 1999

FRONTIER POST

17 MAY 1999

WHO's anti-Polio drive fails to cover Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - The United Nations could not achieve the required results of its recent polio vaccination campaign in the war-ravaged country, a UN spokesperson said on Sunday.

"The World Health Organisation did not reach Hazarajat and Takhar province while achieved partial results in Parwan, Kapisa, Kunduz and Baghlan provinces," the spokesperson Stephanie Bunker told NNI. The result was very successful with vaccination of Herat City.

The UNICEF and WHO launched a massive three-day massive anti-polio immunization campaign in Afghanistan from May 9-11. A supplementation during the second round is scheduled from 13-15 June.

Under the auspices of UNICEF, WHO and the Ministry of Public Health, this important campaign involved over 19,000 volunteers, health workers and social mobilizers. All 4.3 million Afghan children under five years of age were targeted in both rounds for this year's polio

vaccination campaign. In addition, about 3.6 million children between 1 year and 5 years old were benefited from vitamin

Taliban and their opponents had given verbal assurances to the UNICEF to observe ceasefire during the vaccination campaign, however, they continued fighting especially in the central Bamyan, north-eastern Baghlan and northern provinces of Kunduz, Parwan and Kapisa.

The United Nations had established a surveillance system in September 1997, which continues to function despite the ongoing conflict and complex situation inside Afghanistan. So far, 85 cases of confirmed polio have been detected. According to a WHO official the cost of routine immunization programme is about \$2 million per year, while the National Immunization Days alone cost another \$2 million. Mass immunization campaigns and NIDs have been conducted in Afghanistan since 1994.

This campaign was part of the ongoing global commitment to eradicate polio by the

end of the year 2000. Provisions are being made for an intensified effort in 1999 and 2000 with another set of NIDs later this year and two sets scheduled for May/June and October/November in 2000 to attain polio eradication in Afghanistan.

Over 10 Non-Governmental Organizations and other UN agencies are mobilizing communities to ensure that parents take their children for the vaccination. Immunization will be carried out through "OPV posts" established in public such as mosques, madrasas, health posts or private houses where the target group will have relatively easy access.

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have the right to health. Article 24 of the Convention calls upon States to give special emphasis on the provision of primary and preventive health care. Further, Article 24 states that international co-operation should be encouraged to achieve every child's right to health.

UN team visits Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD, May 21: The mission of United Nations Food Programme, on Thursday, completed its visit to Afghanistan.

This was stated by, Stephanie Bunker, a spokesperson for the "Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghani-

stan" in a press briefing here on Friday.

Stephanie said the mission after the completion of its visit to assess the food requirements, reported that circumstances in Mazar Sharif were normal and the life was back on track there.—APP

DAWN 22 MAY 1999

Afghan polio vaccination campaign starts

KABUL, May 9: Tens of thousands of women went to vaccination centres in Kabul on Sunday to have their children inoculated in a UN drive against polio.

The two-phase U.N. campaign is being held in spite of the absence of a formal ceasefire to facilitate it between the Taliban and opposition forces.

"No ceasefire has been officially announced by any of the sides, sadly, but we have started the campaign," Dr Raffiqi of the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) said.

Women converged on mosques and government buildings bringing their children below the age of five for immunization.

The UN appealed to the Taliban and the opposition alliance to observe a three-day ceasefire to allow it to vaccinate more than four million children.

Polio is widespread in Afghanistan, which has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world. The campaign is part of a global drive to eliminate the disease by the end of the century.

The U.N. has stationed 19,000 vaccinators across the country but faces huge logistical problems in reaching all vulnerable children in a country that has been at war for 20 years. The campaign has been conducted every year in Afghanistan since 1994 with the observance of a truce by rival factions.

The leader of the opposition forces, Ahmad Shah Masood, says his men will observe a three-day truce in the second phase of the campaign starting on June 13.—Reuters

First phase of polio campaign ends in Afghanistan

KABUL, May 11: The United Nations on Tuesday ended the first phase of an ambitious plan to rid Afghanistan of polio despite disruptions caused by fierce fighting between warring factions.

More than 21,000 volunteers and health workers targeted 4.3 million children under the age of five for inoculation through a strategy devised by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Dr Mohammad Abdi Jama said the effort was part of international plans to eradicate polio but added that efforts were hampered by civil war and a broken truce.

He said it was difficult to assess the success of the programme in the Hazarajat region of central Afghanistan, where pitched battles resulted in the population of Bamyan fleeing into the surrounding mountains.

The UN appealed to the Taliban and the Northern Alliance to observe a truce so that children could be inoculated. However, the Taliban launched a major offensive in Hazarajat late Friday.

"We need them to agree to a ceasefire. We've deployed more than 21,000 people to reach these kids and this is the most crippling disease the human race has ever known," Jama said.—AFP

DAWN

02 MAY 1999

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10 MAY 1999

US firm begins installing phone link in Afghanistan

KABUL, May 9: Two satellite earth stations have arrived in Afghanistan and will provide the country's first direct phone and internet links with the outside world, officials said on Sunday.

Telephone System International (TSI) spokesman Michael Cecil said the stations would be based in Kabul and in the southern city of Kandahar, and limited phone services would begin in about a month.

"This represents a serious commitment," he said. "The moment the connections are made Afghanistan will be technically linked with the outside world."

Last month TSI announced it had struck a deal with Taliban to integrate local run-down phone services with new technology. This would enable the consumers to deal directly in and out of the country. Cecil said one earth station would carry 500 lines from Kandahar while in Kabul services would depend on TSI's ability to interface the new technology.—AFP

US welcomes Zaher Shah peace proposal

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The United States said Friday it welcomed efforts by former Afghan king Zaher Shah to initiate a peace process for his war-ravaged country. Washington "welcomes efforts by Afghans, including those undertaken by the former king and other moderates, to bring peace to their country," State Department spokesman James Rubin said in a statement.

Zaher Shah, who ruled for more than four decades before he was toppled by his cousin ex-president Daud in 1973, announced from Rome late last month a plan to send a team of his advisers to meet

Afghanistan's ruling Taliban Islamic militia and its opponents.

The plan envisages a meeting of 30 to 35 Afghan personalities to discuss preparations for a Loya Jirga (grand assembly) to find a negotiated solution to the ongoing conflict. Almost immediately after Zaher Shah's proposal was reported, the fundamentalist Taliban ridiculed the idea and its rival Northern Alliance said it was unaware of the plan.

"The aged and the ailing Zaher Shah, who has been living in Rome for the past 26 years still clings to false dreams," the Taliban's newspaper Anis wrote in a commentary.

DAWN

12 MAY 1999

US denies sending commandos to Afghanistan

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD - Lee James Irwin, the spokesman of US Embassy in Islamabad, denied the reports that US had sent commandos to Afghanistan to find out the hideout of Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden, believed to be living in Afghanistan. "There is no truth in such stories," he said. He denied all the reports relating to the trip of three US commandos to Afghanistan and their subsequent disappearance. There were reports that three American commandos were found missing in the tribal area of South Waziristan, who were supposed to cross the border and search out the base of Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan.

The reports about the missing of the three US commandos came to limelight when Peshawar-based US diplomats visited Dera Ismail Khan last week. There was a general impression that the Peshawar-based US diplomats visited the area to find a clue to the three missing Americans.

Later, it was explained that the two visited D.I.Khan to bid farewell to the local officials as one of the two officials was due to leave his present assignment in Pakistan in July next.

12 MAY 1999

US supports Zaher Shah proposal

By Our Staff Correspondent

WASHINGTON, May 14: The US on Friday welcomed the proposal by ex-king Zaher Shah of Afghanistan to convene a "loya jirga" to bring peace to his country.

State Department spokesman Jamie Rubin said former king Zaher Shah had announced his proposal for peace by calling a national assembly or "loya jirga." The US welcomes efforts by Afghans, including those undertaken by the former king and other moderates, to bring peace to their country.

The former king has instructed some of his advisors to contact the Taliban movement as well as the Northern Alliance to deliver an invitation to participate in this peace process, the statement said.

The United States has long called on the Afghan factions to declare a cease-fire and, working with the United Nations, negotiate a political settlement resulting in a broad-based, multi-ethnic, representative government that respects international norms of behaviour on issues of concern including terrorism, drugs, and human rights, particularly the rights of women and girls.

Rubin pointed out that Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Karl F. Inderfurth said before the Senate on April 14, that only this kind of a government can bring to Afghanistan the peace it so sorely needs.

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

15 MAY 1999

US welcomes Zahir Shah's peace proposal

WASHINGTON: The United States said Friday it welcomed efforts by former Afghan king Zahir Shah to initiate a peace process for his war-ravaged country.

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Zahir Shah, who ruled for more than four decades before he was toppled by his cousin ex-president Daud in 1973, announced from Rome late last month a plan to send a team of his advisers to meet Afghanistan's ruling Taliban Islamic militia and its opponents.

The plan envisages a meeting of 30 to 35 Afghan personalities to discuss preparations for a Loya Jirga

(grand assembly) to find a negotiated solution to the ongoing conflict.

Almost immediately after Zahir Shah's proposal was reported, the Taliban ridiculed the idea and its rival Northern Alliance said it was unaware of the plan.

"The aged and the ailing Zahir Shah, who has been living in Rome for the past 26 years still clings to false dreams," the Taliban's newspaper Anis wrote in a commentary.

Anis, which pushes the religious militia's official policy, said the ex-king was responsible for harming Afghansitan and was refusing to give up thoughts of "controlling the destiny of its people".

In Washington, Rubin noted that the United States had long been pushing for all the Afghan factions

to declare a ceasefire and work with the United Nations to negotiate a political settlement to the long-running conflict.

He called for all sides to build on Zahir Shah's proposal and reach an agreement that would result in a "broad-based, multi-ethnic, representative government that respects international norms of behavior on issues of concern including terrorism, drugs, and human rights, particularly the rights of women and girls."

Washington has been harshly critical of the Taliban's policies toward women and has been pressing the militia to sever ties with and expel Osama bin Laden, the Saudi millionaire it blames for last year's East Africa embassy bombings. — AFP

US condemns Taliban's 'revengeful operations'

WASHINGTON: United States has expressed concern over "revengeful operations" by the ruling Taliban against Shia Hazara civilians in central Afghanistan, reports VOA. A report issued by the State Department said that the unpleasant but incomplete reports say that hundreds of houses have been burnt, people made hostage, arrested and killed in the area. The statement has condemned such violations of human rights and called on Afghan warring factions to desist from revengeful operations. — NNI

24 MAY 1999

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

US ambassador warns against pro-Taliban policy

Continued from Page

US ambassador warns against pro-Taliban policy

By Rahimullah Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: US ambassador William B. Milam for the first time publicly cautioned Pakistan Friday that it risked antagonising his country if it continued to pursue its pro-Taliban policy in Afghanistan.

In an interview with the Persian language service of the Voice of America (VOA) broadcast Friday evening, he noted that Pakistan had already antagonised other Western countries and now it was creating distances between itself and the US on account of its support for the Taliban. He said he had clearly informed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif about the effect Pakistan's pro-Taliban policy was having on its relations with the US. Milam in his interview maintained that Islamabad was

assisting the Taliban-led government in Afghanistan in different fields, especially at the diplomatic level. "I don't know why the Pakistan government is doing so because I have yet to find an answer," he was quoted as saying in the interview.

The US ambassador also reiterated Washington's demand that a broad-based, multi-ethnic government be set up in Afghanistan. Such a government, he said, should be able to protect the rights of Afghanistan's ethnic minorities.

This is the first time that an American diplomat has gone public to highlight Washington's growing impatience with both the Taliban and Pakistan. However, those familiar with the situation said such a talk is now common among the policy makers in Washington as they are con-

tvinced that the Taliban are unwilling to extend any help in fighting terrorism and Pakistan on account of its pro-Taliban policy was, in fact, supportive of Kabul's refusal to expel "international terrorists" like Osama bin Laden. By publicly airing these sentiments, the US ambassador in Pakistan has gone a step further in an apparent bid to put pressure on Islamabad to stop backing the Taliban administration.

On its part, Pakistan has consistently stated that it also wants a broad-based government in Afghanistan and has been nudging the Taliban leadership toward this objective. It has also been encouraging the US government officials to directly talk to the Taliban instead of doing so through Pakistani emissaries.

Moreover, Islamabad has been

telling the Americans that it cannot force the Taliban to accept US demands as Afghanistan was a sovereign country and had a functional government. Pakistani government officials have also been arguing that they don't have the kind of influence over the Taliban which the US or other countries have come to believe. Pakistani explanations, it may be added, haven't found many receptive ears in the capitals of the US and its Western allies.

It may not be a coincidence that just before ambassador Milam's VOA interview, the US State Department spokesman James Rubin said in a statement that Washington welcomed the peace-making efforts of former Afghan king Zahir Shah and other moderate Afghans. He said the US since long had been calling for a ceasefire in Afghanistan and urging

Afghan groups to support UN efforts for formation of a broad-based government that could fulfil international commitments in fighting terrorism and drugs and protect human rights, especially those of women and girls.

The Taliban leader, Mulla Mohammad Omar, had on numerous occasions in the past refused to expel Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden from Afghanistan, though he did order that his movements be monitored and his satellite phone and other communication equipment be confiscated. Bin Laden is wanted by the US on charges of "involvement in acts of terrorism" and was declared as America's public enemy number one by President Clinton last August just after Washington's cruise missiles attack on his alleged bases in Afghanistan.

TELENEWS INTERNATIONAL

15 MAY 1999

DAWN

28 MAY 1999

AI accuses Taliban of excesses in Bamiyan

ISLAMABAD, May 27: Initial investigations backed claims that Taliban guards systematically killed innocent civilians after they recaptured the central Afghan city of Bamiyan, Amnesty International said on Thursday.

The human rights watchdog also said troops from the opposition Northern Alliance had "beaten brutally" ordinary people in the city and hit out at the international community for witnessing the "massacres of civilians without making any meaningful effort to protect them."

"Prior to the Taliban's most recent recapture of the city of Bamiyan from the opposition forces on May 9, the majority of people fled to the surrounding mountains with whatever belongings they could take with them," Amnesty said in a statement from London received here.

"According to reports received by Amnesty International, many of those who stayed behind were later the targets of systematic killings by the Taliban guards arriving in the city.

"Estimates of the alleged killings vary widely but hundreds of men, and in a few instances women and children, are reported to have been separated from their families and taken away with no further traces of them," Amnesty said.

Amnesty said the reports fol-

lowed a disturbing pattern similar to abuses committed after the Taliban's capture of Mazar-i-Sharif in August last year.

Last year Amnesty alleged that up to 3,000 ethnic Hazaras were massacred after the Taliban captured the city on Aug 8.

The opposition Northern Alliance has claimed that hundreds of civilian families were massacred and up to 250 homes were burnt to the ground, in some cases with their occupants still inside, after the Taliban militia retook Bamiyan city.

But the rights group said: "Amnesty International has also received reports of human rights abuses against the civilian population committed by anti-Taliban forces during the three-week period (April 21 and May 9) when they were in control of Bamiyan and surrounding areas.

"These include severe beating of people suspected of collaborating with the Taliban, arbitrary detention of dozens of civilians, and ill-treatment of their family members," it said.

Amnesty noted that Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, has condemned the house burnings and said it was done in retaliation by the anti-Taliban forces, while making no statement about the alleged massacres by the Taliban forces.—AFP

Taliban killed civilians in Bamiyan: Amnesty

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longings they could take with them,' Amnesty said in a statement from London received here. 'According to reports received by Amnesty International, many of those who stayed behind were later the targets of systematic killings by the Taliban guards arriving in the city.

'Estimates of the alleged killings vary widely but hundreds of men, and in few instances women and children, are reported to have been separated from their families and taken away with no further traces of them,' Amnesty said.

But Amnesty said the reports followed a disturbing pattern similar to abuses committed after the Taliban's capture of the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif in August 1998.

DAWN

28 MAY 1999

FRONTIER POST 17 MAY 1999

Uzbek-Iran accord on Afghan peace efforts

TASHKENT, May 6: Uzbek President Islam Karimov and Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazzi agreed on a joint effort to achieve peace in neighbouring Afghanistan, a spokesman at the Iranian embassy in Tashkent said on Thursday.

Kharazzi, who wrapped up a two-day visit to the Central Asian republic on Thursday, and Karimov said they would seek a peaceful solution to the conflict through the UN Security Council, said the spokesman, who declined to be identified.

"Even if all of Afghanistan is seized by the Taliban, Uzbekistan and Iran will... insist on a solution of this issue through the UN Security Council," he said.

The spokesman declined to reveal details of the talks between Karimov and Kharazzi.

Iran, opposed the Taliban, who control about 80 percent of Afghanistan, has preached regional cooperation, especially with the help of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

But so far regional efforts have not been successful in finding a solution.

A meeting of a contact group that includes Russia, the United States and the six countries bordering Afghanistan — the former Soviet republics of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, Pakistan and China and Iran — had been scheduled to meet in Tashkent this spring, but has been postponed to this summer.—AFP

Turkmenistan to supply power to Afghanistan

KABUL (AFP) - Turkmenistan has agreed to supply power to Taliban-held provinces in western and southwestern Afghanistan, an official report said Sunday.

Deputy Foreign Minister Mawlawi Abdurahman Zahed said a protocol would be signed 'soon,' the ruling Taliban militia's Heywad newspaper reported. Zahed, who is Turkmenistan at the head of a Taliban delegation, has already met with Turkmen Foreign Minister Boris Sheikhumuradov and other senior officials.

He discussed oil, gas and power supply to energy-starved Afghanistan, as well as cooperation in civil aviation, Heywad said.

'God willing, a protocol will be signed soon with Turkmenistan,' Zahed said.

Under the accord the neighbouring Central Asian republic would extend the power line to western Herat and southwestern Kandahar and Helmand provinces, the paper said. Afghanistan generates electricity from dams, many damaged in 20 years of war. The depleted supply is insufficient to meet demands of local people, who rely on kerosene, firewood and coal for cooking and heating.

Zahed did not say when the project would start or how it would be financed.

The newspaper said the two countries would discuss improving of infrastructure in Afghanistan.

Herat, the second major Afghan city after Kabul, borders Turkmenistan, which enjoys good relations with the Taliban.

NATION
18 MAY 1999

Tehran denies border clashes with Afghanistan

TEHRAN: Iran denied reports of military clashes with Afghanistan, the official news agency IRNA said Tuesday.

"Iranian forces are stationed in the eastern regions of the country and only intervene to pursue and arrest bandits and drug-traffickers infiltrating into Iranian territory," an interior ministry official said.

Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia Monday accused Iranian troops of entering the western Afghan provinces of Farah and Herat on Thursday. The troops "carried out military operations against innocent Afghan civilians," according to a protest note handed to Iranian diplomats in Pakistan.

The Iranian press reported Monday that 27 Afghans, described as 'armed bandits' were killed in the previous two days during an extensive Iranian military operation in the east-

ern Iranian region of Torbat-e-Heydarieh.

"Armed bandits" is a term generally used in Iran to refer to drug-traffickers from Afghanistan. Tehran believes that Afghan drug-traffickers export massive quantities of opium and heroin via Iran.

Afghanistan is the world's number-one opium producer. The Taliban control some 80 per cent of the territory, including the main opium production areas.

Relations between the Taliban and Iran have remained strained since the murder of nine Iranian diplomats in August last year when the Taliban seized Mazar-i-Sharif in northern Afghanistan from the opposition alliance. Iran recognizes the government of former president Burhanuddin Rabbani ousted by the Taliban after the fall of Kabul in 1996. — AFP

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

19 MAY 1999

Pakistan's Afghan policy criticised

By Qasim Shah

PESHAWAR: The Afghan problem should be left to the Afghans for solution as all the imposed solutions have failed to bring peace in the country, said speakers on the concluding day of a two-day national conference on foreign policy of Pakistan here on Tuesday.

The conference, which was organised by the international relations department, University of Peshawar, to evaluate the country's foreign policy, was addressed by many eminent scholars.

Expert on Afghan affairs Lt Gen (Retd) Kamal Mattinuddin described the Pak-Afghan relations in its historical perspective and said since the very beginning relations between the two countries were strained by the Pukhtunistan issue. Talking about the recent situation in Afghanistan, he said Taliban were a ground reality and have to be taken into account. He criticised Pakistan's Afghan policy and said Pakistan was trying to secure a role of king maker in Afghanistan. He suggested that the options of Loya Jirga and Zahir Shah should be taken into account for solving the issue. About the Central Asian policy of the country he said that it should be government-controlled and not privatised one.

Dr Riffat Hussain said causes for the ongoing civil war in Afghanistan could be traced back to the text of the flawed Geneva Accord. He said Pakistan was lacking a clear policy towards the Central Asian Republics (CARs). He stressed the government to follow a cautious attitude in its relations with CARs in the field of defence as it might embarrass the Rus-

sians.

Dr Khalida Ghaus from the University of Karachi, while presenting her paper on Pak policy towards west Asia, said our policy remained at minimum level towards west Asian states. She added the country's foreign policy should have two levels where one should concentrate on the short term objectives and the other address long term objectives. She observed that Pakistan needed to reevaluate its foreign policy priorities in the post cold war era.

Former ambassador Maqbool Bhatti presented his paper focusing on the Pakistan-Iran relations. He hoped that now after some period of disturbances bilateral relations of the two countries were going towards normalisation. He suggested that both the countries must avoid rivalry in CARs and should seek mutually agreed solution for the Afghan civil war. He stressed on the people to people contact between the countries to improve their relations.

Afghan scholar Rasool Amin said that Pakistan should take initiative to bring different warring factions in Afghanistan to the negotiating table. Another Afghan scholar Dr Anwar Hadi was of the opinion that Pakistan's Afghan policy was flawed and needed re-evaluation as masses in Afghanistan were considering Pakistan as a colonial power trying to get something more than good well of the rulers at Kabul.

At the end of the conference, three different groups comprising the students of the IR department presented their suggestions compiled under the auspices of the scholars present on the occasion.

Pakistan to rebuild part of Afghan highway

ISLAMABAD, May 22: Pakistan will help rehabilitate a 10-kilometre stretch of the dilapidated Jalalabad-Kabul road in Afghanistan under an agreement signed here on Saturday, officials said.

The agreement was signed by deputy minister for public works in the Taliban government, Maulvi Saaduddin Saeid, and a senior Pakistani foreign ministry official, an official statement said.

A 10-kilometre portion of the road will be rebuilt this year and more funds will be made available for the project later, it said.

The road, which links northwest Pakistan with Kabul via Jalalabad, was badly damaged during the 1979-89 liberation war against the occupation of Afghanistan by the former Soviet Union.

NNI learnt from its sources that the construction would cost Rs. 30 million. More funds will also be allocated in the next financial year. Construction will begin on June 1 and will compete within 6 months. In the first phase road between Daranto to Sarkando would be rehabilitated on the main Jalalabad-Kabul highway.

Public Works Ministry of Afghanistan will manage this project under technical supervision of National Highway Authority of Pakistan.— AFP/NNI

DAWN

23 MAY 1999

More foreigners visit Afghan border areas

By Allah Nawaz Khan

DERA ISMAIL KHAN, May 14: More foreign nationals have been noticed visiting the D.I. Khan and Tank areas lately for some unspecified reasons especially following the visit of two US consulate officers from Peshawar on May 6. The two US consulate officials during their stay in D.I. Khan and Tank had met the commissioner and the political agent, South Waziristan.

The latest to visit this remote southern district of NWFP on Thursday was the Australian High Commissioner in Pakistan, Mr Geoffrey Allen, who was accompanied by Mrs Allen. They were closely followed by some other foreigners holding British, Swiss and Irish passports.

The foreigners in the area had same destination — Zhob in Balochistan which is situated near Afghan border with Pakistan. A non-metalled road connects Zhob with Afghan province of Ghazni and has been used frequently by visitors both local and Afghans.

Incidentally, the road from D.I. Khan to Zhob, popularly known as Fort Sandeman Road, passes through the interior of South Waziristan tribal area and it is considered unsafe for travel without proper armed escort. The road winds up from Jandola to Razmak, then on to Wana in the Waziristan tribal area then reaching Zhob border district.

It is for the first time that such activity has been observed in this area which had virtually remained out of bounds even for the locals. Both locals and foreigners are not allowed to use the road without official escort.

On Thursday evening the Australian High Commissioner and Mrs Allen arrived at the local Circuit House which is separated by a wall to the Commissioner house. After overnight stay the couple left for Zhob. Their visit had been duly cleared by the divisional commissioner under orders received from the Interior Ministry and the NWFP home and tribal affairs department.

The Australians all the while stayed in D.I. Khan and the High Commissioner was seen to be under strict surveillance of a secret agency. However, early Friday morning Mr Geoffrey Allen rather surreptitiously left the Circuit House in his car and returned after about 90 minutes.

Incidentally the political agent, South Waziristan, Arbab Mohammad Hanif was also in D.I. Khan on Thursday and Friday. The government sources later termed as significant the presence of the

political agent in the house adjacent to that of commissioner's house.

However, talking to *Dawn* on telephone the commissioner, Syed Mazhar Ali Shah, denied his meeting with the visiting foreign dignitary. He said that the political agent was in D.I. Khan in connection with a meeting with him which had nothing to do with the visit of the High Commissioner.

To a question the commissioner said that the road to Zhob having been developed in a top class metalled road now provides the shortest route to Balochistan and hence it was being frequently used by both locals and foreigners.

Meanwhile, four other foreign nationals were also in D.I. Khan at the same time and their destination was also Zhob. It was not known whether they were cleared by higher authorities in Islamabad or Peshawar. One of them was identified as Mr Peter Euro, an Irish passport holder (Passport No 70-78634) who used a 350cc motorcycle bearing registration No DL-25E-4411 for the journey. He stayed at the local Rose Hotel for the night from where he checked out early Friday morning.

Another couple, Mr Alan and Ms Cendy with British passports passed the night in their vehicle No S-176ESU within the Rose Hotel's premises and reportedly left for Zhob on Friday morning.

Another visitor was Mr Sec Ponaw Patrigak, holder of Swiss passport who was also travelling on a 350cc motorcycle No MH-01Z-4365. This gentleman stayed at the Jan's Hotel for the night and he, too, left for Zhob in the morning.

Some intelligence agency people said that somehow the foreigners seem to have discovered the hide-out of Osama bin Laden and a further probe was on. Incidentally, one of the three Americans who had crossed over into Afghanistan via South Waziristan in mysterious circumstances was found dead on the Tajik border in Afghanistan and his body was later handed over to American officials.

DENIAL: A Foreign Office spokesman on Friday described as, "false and baseless," a news appearing in a section of the press about the presence of US commandos and a US base in North Western parts of Pakistan, adds APP.

When contacted, he said, the report was, "figment of imagination," as there was no such presence anywhere in Pakistan, he said.

A section of the press on Thursday had claimed that US commandos had been sighted in Waziristan.

DAWN

15 MAY 1989

Pakistan believes in dialogues with India

West must help Afghans: Shamshad

From Our Correspondent

LAHORE—Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmad has called upon the international community, especially the West, to help Afghan people in meeting out their basic needs before pressing for the human rights issues.

The Foreign Secretary was talking to the newsmen here at Lahore Airport on Saturday immediately after his arrival from Singapore, along with the other members of Prime Minister entourage which visited Brunei and Singapore.

Shamshad who talked quite candidly on various foreign policy issues, said it was ironic that Afghanistan, which played a vital role for the West towards the end of cold war, had been left to its own when it badly needs the support of those countries which exploited for their own gains.

He said the international community instead of raising the issue of human rights should provide the much needed basic amenities to Afghan people.

He said once their basic needs are met the larger issues of human rights and democracy could be addressed.

Commenting upon the Prime Minister's visit to Singapore and Brunei, he said the basic aim of these visits was to upgrade economic cooperation with these countries which had unique position in the ASEAN region and in this respect the visits had been a great success.

He said in Brunei a Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) was set to evolve a framework for economic cooperation in various sectors of economy. He said this Commission would meet before the end of this year. He said the visit was also very helpful in enlightening the top businessmen about the investment opportunities and policies in Pakistan.

In Singapore which has been a model for the developing countries, the business community was briefed about scope of investment in Pakistan, he added. To a question if something mean-

ingful came out of these visits, the Foreign Secretary said such visits did not produce quick results, but they went a long way in building economic relations on strong footing.

He said these countries assured that they would support Pakistan in its quest for the membership of ASEAN as 'Sectorial Dialogue Partner'.

Responding to a question about the outcome of Prime Minister's visit to Moscow, he said perhaps fastest follow-up action had been taken to realise all the goals set in that visit. Already a Joint Ministerial Commission was in place, a negotiation on Afghanistan progressed and a delegation from Tartaristan led by its Deputy Prime Minister had already visited Pakistan to explore business opportunities.

He said this visit also broke the long inertia which had been witnessed in Pak-Russia relations since the creation of Pakistan and the leadership of both the countries felt that it was time to bury the hatchet and make a new beginning.

To a question about making the SAARC effective, he said it was due to the Indian hegemonic designs which had impeded this grouping to realise its aims and objectives.

Commenting upon suspension of Indo-Pak talks, he said in India the political situation had been very uncertain. He hoped that once the situation became clear the dialogue would be started from the point where it was left.

He said Pakistan strongly believed that all the outstanding disputes should be resolved through negotiations. He said the nuclearisation of the Sub-continent made it all the more important that the two countries should sit and talk as war was not the solution of the problems.

About the upcoming visit of Prime Minister to China he said this visit would further strengthen the two countries' relations. He said both countries had common perception on international and regional issues.

NATION

16 MAY 1999

NATION

03 MAY 1999

Taliban bomb opposition bases after losing ground

KABUL (AFP) - Taliban jets bombed northeastern Afghanistan's Takhar province Monday killing 10 civilians and wounding 70 others as opposition forces in a pre-dawn attack seized some areas in neighbouring Kunduz, an anti-Taliban sources said.

Taliban planes carried out four sorties on Taloqan city, the provincial capital of Takhar hitting shopping centres when residents were in the bazaar, a senior opposition spokesman Abdullah said.

The raids left 10 people dead and more than 70 injured, he said adding that most of the victims were villagers who had come from adjoining areas including Badakhshan province to the city's popular weekly market.

Abdullah said the air strikes came after forces of northern military strongman Ahmad Shah Masood launched an attack from Takhar against the Taliban-held Kunduz province.

They dismantled the religious militia's frontlines on the main road and advanced seven kilometers west of the key town of Khanabad, he added.

'Our forces captured Puli Bangi on the main road,' he said, adding the operation was 'actively supported by popular uprising' in the area.

He said 32 Taliban fighters were killed and 82 wounded while 18 were taken

prisoner.

No independent confirmation was immediately available for the opposition claim. The spokesman put the alliance losses at seven killed and 12 wounded.

Abdullah said heavy fighting was going on around Khanabad, which controls access to Kunduz city strategically located on the Tajikistan border.

He said a small district of Aq Tepa, north of Kunduz city, also fell to Masood supporters after 'the local population rose against the Taliban.'

Taliban soldiers based in Kunduz launched two counter-attacks to recover the lost territory including a large area on both sides of the Kunduz-Takhar road but they remained 'unsuccessful,' he said.

No Taliban spokesman was immediately available for comment.

Taliban control about 75 per cent of Afghanistan while the opposition alliance holds several provinces in northern Afghanistan.

Abdullah said the Taliban militia attacked four opposition posts in Guldara district 25 kilometers north of Kabul late Sunday but the attacks were blunted.

The hardline Taliban last month lost control of central Bamyan province to the opposition Hezb-i-Wahdat faction of mainly Shia Muslims.

Taliban foil opposition assault in north of Kabul

KABUL (AFP) - Afghanistan's Taliban militia repulsed an overnight attack by supporters of opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood on frontlines north of Kabul, militia commanders said Sunday.

There were also rocket attacks on Kabul's military and civilian airport Sunday afternoon. Residents said three people — a farmer and two drivers — were wounded. They said they believed the rockets were fired by Masood's troops in the Shamali plain, 25 kilometers north of the capital.

'They launched an attack last night, which was repulsed,' Mulla Abdul Nafe, a Taliban commander on the so-called Old Road front, told reporters.

He said the frontlines remained unchanged even though the fighting, in which heavy artillery was used, continued throughout the night.

There was no independent confirmation and an opposition spokesman was not available for comment.

The northern frontlines have been quiet for the past few months despite fighting in other parts of the country.

Late last month Hezb-i-Wahdat, part of Masood's northern alliance, recaptured the central province of Bamyan from the Taliban after eight months.

Taliban troops control about 75 per cent of the country.

NATION

03 MAY 1999

Rs 4.2 billion loss suffered on account of Afghan trade

By Our Correspondent

ISLAMABAD, May 30: A duty loss of Rs 4.2 billion has been recorded by the Government of Pakistan in July-April, nine months of the current financial year, on account of exempted imports under the Afghan Transit Trade Agreement.

The CBR records indicate that imports valuing Rs 17.5 billion have been made for transshipment to Kabul during these 10 months of the current fiscal. These goods fell in the range of 50 broad categories, mainly motor oil, motor vehicles, electric goods, watches and merchandise of hundreds of small items.

The month-wise duty loss on leviable value of these imports recorded from July 1998 to April 1999 has been as follows: Rs 260 million (July 1998); Rs 290 million (August 1998); Rs 360 million (September 1998); Rs 400 million (October 1998); Rs 425 million (November 1998); Rs 440 million (December 1998); Rs 480 million (January 1999); Rs 520 million (February 1999); Rs 525 million (March 1999), Rs 500 million (April 1999).

Latest reports on these imports indicate that in July-April period of the current fiscal year, these imports were valued at Rs 4.9 billion higher than in the same period last year. During these 10 months, clearance of Rs 13.8 billion worth of ATTA goods has been reported by the Customs valuation/appraisement authorities. The April 1999 clearances of such goods was valued at Rs 1.297 billion. Items of 47 categories with 635 bills of entries were cleared in April.

The duty-free import of motor vehicles in this month was of Rs 193.45 million (659 packages); motor oil Rs 163 million (154,466 packages); sundry goods Rs 105.6 million (36,993 cartons); electric

goods Rs 132.46 million (44,982 cartons); bicycles and parts Rs 20.2 million (10,042 cartons); general items Rs 53.1 million (34,389 cartons); green tea Rs 91.78 million (32,497 packets); battery cells Rs 26.83 million (35,699 packets); glassware/dinner sets/porcelain ware Rs 61.4 million (65,659 sets); hardware Rs 15.48 million (16,638 packets); pad locks Rs 20.71 million (6,338 packets); steel sheets Rs 28.91 million (3,257 bundles); vacuum flasks Rs 16.23 million (6,702 cartons); karyana bob Rs 26.65 million (11,179 cartons); footwear Rs 8.76 million (4,279 cartons); video cassettes Rs 32.77 million (20,526 packets); hardware Rs 15.48 million (16,638 packets); tape recorders Rs 4.43 million (1,313 cartons); used telephone sets Rs 25.11 million (2,104 cartons); medicines Rs 1.93 million (100 cartons); stationery Rs 9 million (5,762 cartons); tooth paste Rs 9 million (5,120 cartons); cosmetics Rs 15.9 million (9,782 cartons); PVC tapes Rs 0.302 million (600 cartons); bulbs and tube-lights Rs 8.82 million (13,763 cartons); shoe polish Rs 11.73 million (22,70 cartons); black pepper Rs 40.65 million (20,526 cartons); garments and accessories Rs 25.63 million (10,923 cartons); water pumps Rs 31.26 million (862 cartons); almonds Rs 12.78 million (5,419 cartons); electric irons Rs 9.45 million (6,055 cartons); mumjama fends Rs 9.18 million (1,571 cartons); betel nuts Rs 8.24 million (1,483 cartons); sugar Rs 7.39 billion (9,600 bags); generators Rs 7.22 million (828 W/cases).

Other major items valuing less than Rs 4 million include lanterns, tiles, sewing machines, shaving blades, foodstuff, kitchenware, microwave ovens, medicines, welding electrodes, milk powder, carpets, toys, umbrellas, tiles and PVC tape.

FRONTIER POST 16 MAY 1999

Adminn asked to restrict Afghan refugees to camps

F.P. Report

MANSEHRA - The traders and shopkeepers associations of Mansehra have hurled an ultimatum that if the Afghan refugees were not restricted to their camps within 15 days, the local administration will be responsible for any sorts of law and order situation.

A joint meeting of the Markazi Anjuman-e-Tajran, the shopkeepers and the butchers association held here on Saturday at a local hotel, which was addressed by Malik Sajjad president and Sadiq Saraf, general secretary of the Markazi Anjuman-e-Tajran, Abdul Waheed, general secretary of the Butchers Association and the shopkeepers representatives Soofi Gohar Aman and Muhammad Zakryya.

The speakers said for the last 21 years they had been hosting these Afghan brothers, but in turn they had given them the gifts of heroin and kashinkov culture besides incurring heavy loss to their businesses.

They said that the Afghan refugees had occupied all positions right from the humblest jobs to business and transport rendering the local people jobless who pay heavy taxes to the state. The Anjuman-e-

Tajran representatives came hard down on the local administration for dispossessing the local people of their small businesses, whose children according to them were starving to death.

Soofi Gohar, claimed that a number of Afghan refugees had managed to get Pakistani national identity cards and had purchased huge properties. "Our sons despite working in overseas countries cannot purchase even a single inch of land but the Afghan refugees besides purchasing property are openly running the lucrative business of electronics and the contraband items," he said.

He maintained that the Afghan refugees were doing all that on the black money earned through the heroin and other drugs and the illegal business of arms.

A unanimous resolution was adopted in the meeting warning that if Afghan refugees were not restricted to their camps within 15 days, the local administration would itself be responsible for the consequences.

The resolution also demanded immediate transfer of Assistant Commissioner Mansehra, Mahmood Kharal.

Taliban's rivals seeking peace

By Our Correspondent

ISLAMABAD, May 19: Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Siddique Kanju informed the National Assembly Committee on Foreign Affairs that the Taliban had recaptured Bamyan and some elements in the hostile forces were trying to

seek rapprochement with the Taliban. The minister was briefing the committee here on Wednesday in the Parliament house.

On the CTBT, the committee was reminded of prime minister's statement in New York last year.

20 MAY 1999

DAWN

Kosovo issue will sap scarce funds for Afghanistan

KABUL (AFP) - Massive foreign aid demands in Kosovo have exacted a toll on Afghanistan and further complicated life for aid groups, already struggling to re-establish themselves here.

'Yeah, I'm mad because they haven't sent me my money because of Kosovo and that means I haven't been able to pay my staff, pay for my supplies and I owe people money,' American aid worker Mary MacMakin said.

As the director for Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Support for Afghanistan (PARSA), MacMakin, a 70-year-old grandmother, is responsible for wool spinning cooperatives run by women. She also relies on the funding body United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to run other programmes which include training illiterate orphans for apprenticeships in the electrical trades.

'The work is going on but the funding is precarious,' she says.

Her sentiments are echoed by many aid workers who see Kosovo emerging as a rival for scarce funds, and as an unfortunate distraction which is slow-

ing down the bureaucrats who allocate aid. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), it needs 143 million dollars for its immediate efforts in helping 750,000 refugees who have fled Kosovo.

Total pledges exceeded 100 million dollars following an urgent appeal to Western governments a week ago.

'Anytime there's another humanitarian crisis it obviously detracts attention from Afghanistan, and Kosovo is holding the world's attention now,' said PACTEC airlines Kabul director David Brooks. PACTEC is a non-profit airline and communications support group which specialises in ferrying members of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) across borders.

Most NGOs left Afghanistan in July last year after a dispute with the ruling Taliban involving the relocation their operations to an abandoned polytechnic. The rest followed a month later in a UN evacuation of the country, triggered by the death of a UN staffer, seen as a reprisal for the US missile strikes in Afghanistan on August 20.

The UN returned in March, and 32

NGOs have also agreed to come back but their numbers are small compared to a year ago.

'They are coming in,' Brooks said. 'But in Afghanistan we've also got 'donor fatigue.'

'The war has been going on for 20 years and it's getting more and more difficult for NGOs to raise money for Afghanistan which is tragic because this country needs relief and development support, now more than ever.'

Afghan 'donor fatigue' is a euphemism for foreign governments and charities which have grown increasingly tired by unending civil war and the harsh practices imposed on Afghans by the Taliban.

'Few people care about Afghanistan,' said another Western NGO official, who declined to be named. 'The situation rarely improves and this country is fast slipping off the map.'

He said aid funding was being linked to human rights — and in Afghanistan where alleged terrorists are sheltered and women have been ostracised from work and education — finding money is getting harder.

World interested in rebuilding Afghan institutions

From Shamim Shahid

PESHAWAR - Amidst peace initiatives for a negotiated solution to the long-awaited Afghan conflict, a large number of world countries, particularly the developed ones have evinced keen interest in the reconstruction of war-affected institutions of Afghanistan.

In this connection, Germany has decided to send a parliamentary delegation to Kabul in September. To make arrangement for a German teams' visit to Kabul, a two-member delegation Saturday left Peshawar for Kabul. The delegates will comprise Mr Brechard, political advisor of the German Parliament, and First Secretary in the German Embassy at Islamabad Mr Konicka.

Sources from Islamabad informed this correspondent that both Brechard and Konicka, during their stay at Kabul, would meet high-ranking officers of the Islamic Emirates and would apprise them of their priorities regarding rebuilding and reconstruction process of Afghanistan. The sources further said that they would hold meetings with UN officials and UN-relat-

ed agencies as well as other NGOs officers.

Similarly, another 24-member delegation from United States of America is currently staying in Afghanistan.

The sources recalled that on May 18, 1999 an 8-member delegation comprising professors and intellectuals from United States of America signed an agreement with the Vice Chancellor of Kabul University. According to the agreement, now the Kabul University is affiliated with the leading educational institutions of United States. The American professors and intellectuals assured the VC of providing books for various faculties and departments to the Kabul University.

Recently, the French government sent back its Ambassador to Kabul following a visit of a high level French delegation. The sources said that French government also intended to help the war-affected people of Afghanistan.

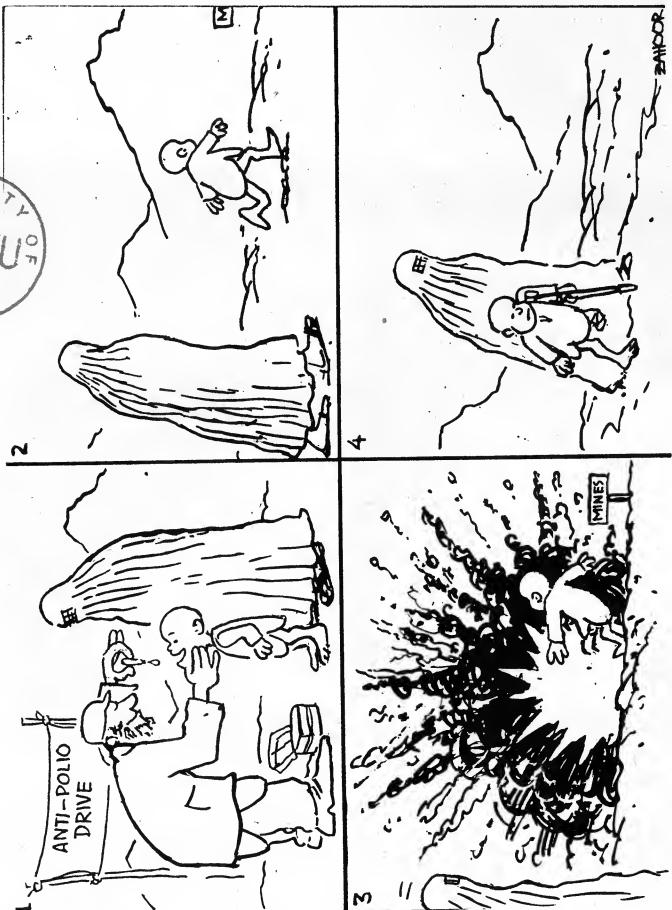
After the normalcy is returning to Afghanistan, the UNO international staffers returned to Mazar-i-Sharif on May 17 last, who would find out ways and means to resume relief activities in the northern provinces of Afghanistan.



The once bustling Afghan refugee camp at Nasirbagh, Peshawar, which was brought to ruins by the authorities by bulldozing the katcha houses for Regi Lalma housing scheme.— Photo by Syed Haider Shah

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

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Taliban claim foiling opp assault

KABUL (AFP)

Afghanistan's Taliban militia have repulsed an overnight attack by supporters of opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood on frontlines north of Kabul, militia commanders said Sunday.

There were also rocket attacks on Kabul's military and civilian airport Sunday afternoon. Residents said three people -- a farmer and two drivers -- were wounded.

They said they believed the rockets were fired by Masood's troops in the Shamali plain, 25 kilometers north of the capital.

"They launched an attack last night, which was repulsed," Mulla Abdul Nafe, a Taliban commander on the so-called Old Road front, told reporters.

He said the frontlines remained unchanged even though the fighting, in which heavy artillery was used, continued throughout the night.

An opposition spokesman later refuted the Taliban claim, saying the northern frontlines were quiet last night.

"This is baseless. There was no fighting north of Kabul last night," the spokesman Abdullah

said.

He said fighting however continued in northern Samangan and central Bamiyan provinces between Taliban and opposition forces.

The Taliban made "unsuccessful attempts to re-capture parts of Dare Soof and Saighan districts" recently taken by opposition forces, Abdullah told AFP by satellite telephone.

He also claimed supporters of the anti-Taliban alliance captured a military helicopter of the religious militia in Samangan province.

The helicopter from the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif mistakenly landed in Dare Soof area captured by the opposition fighters three days ago, he added.

He said opposition troops captured the three-member crew and seven local commanders besides some ammunition on board. The helicopter has now been shifted to a safer place, he said.

Independent confirmation of rival claims was not immediately available.

The northern frontlines have been quiet for the past few months despite fighting in other parts of the country.

Afghan opposition claims control over Kunduz

KABUL, May 4: Fighters of the anti-Taliban northern alliance are consolidating the territorial gains they made on Monday in the northern province of Kunduz, a spokesman said on Tuesday.

Abdullah said troops of ex-defence minister Ahmad Shah Masood "are in full control" of the areas they captured in the Taliban-held province bordering Tajikistan.

Speaking by satellite telephone from the northern Panjsher valley, Abdullah denied Taliban reports that Masood's attack in the province was unsuccessful.

"The objectives set for Monday's operations have been achieved," Abdullah said, adding that three Taliban counter-attacks failed and the area was now quiet.

The opposition says Masood's fighters in a dawn attack on Monday broke the Taliban frontlines on the Kunduz-Takhar main road and advanced seven kilometres westwards towards Khanabad after capturing the Bangi bridge.

They also took areas on both sides of the main road and the district of Aq Tepa to the north of Kunduz city, according to the opposition alliance.

The Radio Shariat said on Tuesday the Taliban had defeated Masood's troops and denied them any advance in Kunduz.—AFP

Taliban claim foiling opposition assault

KABUL, May 2: The Taliban militia repulsed an overnight attack by supporters of opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood on frontlines north of Kabul, militia commanders said on Sunday.

There were also rocket attacks on Kabul's military and civilian airport on Sunday afternoon. Residents said three people -- a farmer and two drivers -- were wounded.

They said they believed the rockets were fired by Masood's troops in the Shamali plain, 25kms north of the capital.

"They launched an attack last night (Saturday), which was repul-

sed," Mulla Abdul Nafe, a Taliban commander on the so-called Old Road front, told reporters.

He said the frontlines remained unchanged even though the fighting, in which heavy artillery was used, continued throughout the night.

The northern frontlines have been quiet for the past few months despite fighting in other parts of the country.

Late last month the Shia-dominated Hezbi-i-Wahdat, a part of Masood's northern alliance, recaptured the central province of Bamiyan from the Taliban after eight months.—AFP

DAWN

05 MAY 1999

Dozens killed in Taliban-rivals artillery duel

Opposition consolidates gains in north of Kabul

KABUL: Dozens of people were dead and wounded following a night-long artillery duel between Taliban soldiers and opposition troops north of the beleaguered capital of Kabul, doctors and frontline commanders said Friday.

Taliban commanders at the front line some 20 kilometers north of Kabul, accused their opponents of intentionally shelling Shakardara, the nearest village to the frontline. "Almost 2,000 people crossed during the night to get to Kabul from the area," Mohammed Wali, a Taliban commander at the front line said early Friday.

At a hospital in Kabul, aided by the international red cross, doctors said they received several people suffering shrapnel wounds. They did not have an exact figure. But 20-year-old Sartol, who carried his wounded sister from Shakardara to the hospital, said he saw four bodies of villagers killed in the shelling.

Wali said there were 35 bodies of opposition soldiers in the fields near the front line village that the opposi-

tion had been unable to retrieve. Earlier this week Wali said a senior Taliban commander Mullah Agha urged opposition soldiers to hand over their weapons and surrender.

According to Wali, Agha, using a loudspeaker, said: "why are you killing your brothers? We are hoping that you will put down your weapons and join with us." In the past one week, Kabul has been hit several times by opposition shells. Most of the rockets and shells have landed on the northern edge of the city, some near the combined military and civilian airport. But on Wednesday one shell hit a Taliban military base and ammunition depot killing a child and wounding at least eight other people all in Kabul's northern Khairkhana neighborhood.

The Taliban army and their northern-based opponents are waging fierce battles on several fronts. The Taliban rule about 90 percent of Afghanistan and the opposition the remaining 10 percent. Efforts by the United Nations to bring about a peaceful end to the conflict have

largely failed. Several attempts at negotiating a cease fire have failed.

NNI adds: The Afghan opposition alliance troops have consolidated their gains in the north of Kabul by launching fresh offensives on the capital city Kabul, a top military commander said Friday. The offensives have been launched from the districts of Guldara, Guzar, Sarrak-e-Nau and Sarrak-e-Kohna, General Sayed Hussain Anwari, Chief Military Commander Harrakat-e-Islami Afghanistan told NNI from Takhar.

General Anwari said the alliance armies have succeeded in pushing back the Taliban in numerous districts. The Taliban's most severe set back occurred in Shakardara, where a prominent Taliban commander, Anwar Khan and his troops were dealt a heavy blow and forced to retreat from the district.

Large quantities of heavy artillery, tanks and ammunitions were seized in Shakardara. Previously, the Taliban regime maintained three ammunition depots in the district, he said.

Taliban commander among 25 killed
ISLAMABAD (NNI) - At least 25 Taliban including their prominent commander and Mulla Tahir were killed during fighting for control of strategic Darra-e-Sur in Samangan province in northern Afghanistan. A commander of the anti-Hussein Anwari, General Syed Aftab to this news agency from Afghanistan faxed a message that the opposition Tuesday forces admitted slight retreat following a major offensive by the student militia on Darra-e-Sur.

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Expectations of the ethnic Hazaras, who were the main supporters of the militia, were dashed. "Most people expected the Hezb-i Wahdat to hold Bamyan. After all it's their home town but the Taliban are back in there and again," the western sources said. The Taliban control about 75 per cent of Afghanistan against an alliance of cent of civil war against an alliance of mujahideen factions who seized power after the last communist regime collapsed in 1992.

Afghan factions maintain fight around Bamian

Taliban claim retaking Bamiyan

KABUL, May 9: The Taliban militia on Sunday recaptured the central Afghan city of Bamiyan from the opposition Northern Alliance, Taliban information minister Mulla Amir Khan Muttaqi said.

"Bamiyan was recaptured today after the operation began from two sides, to the north and south of the city," he said.

The militia had lost the city to the Hezb-i-Wahdat faction of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance amid a reported uprising on April 21.

Bamiyan was earlier seized by the Taliban in September last year.

Muttaqi said the militia entered Bamiyan from the north "as a result of a coordinated attack by the Taliban soldiers and local people of Saighan and Khamard."

He said Taliban also captured Haji Gak pass in the southern flank.

"The enemy soldiers are only in Yawkawlang," a town located 50 kilometres west of Bamiyan, Muttaqi said.

The fall of Bamiyan city has paved the way for better implementation of the UN-sponsored polio vaccination in the central province, the Taliban minister remarked.—AFP

DAWN

10 MAY 1993

Taliban launch 2-pronged attack on Bamiyan

KABUL (AFP) - Fighting in central Afghanistan continued Saturday after the Taliban launched a counter-offensive at Bamiyan, the opposition northern alliance said.

Alliance spokesman Abdullah said the militia launched a two-pronged attack late Thursday evening on Bamiyan, a central Afghan city which the alliance captured on April 21.

'They attacked from Saizhan to the

north and Behsud from the south and they had made some ground towards the Aq Robat Pass,' Abdullah told AFP.

A Taliban spokesman was not available for comment.

Independent sources were unable to confirm the fighting in Bamiyan but said Taliban aerial bombardments on Taloqan in the northeast of the country were continuing.

'Those bombings are proving quite

relentless,' one western source said.

Five days ago the opposition claimed at least 10 people were killed and 70 others wounded when Taliban jets dropped at least three bombs on a crowded shopping centre in Taloqan.

Local analysts say the Taliban is maintaining a fleet of about 15 Soviet-made MiG fighter jets.

The Afghan opposition, which controls just 25 percent of the country, recently launched a new series of attacks against the areas held by the militia.

Abdullah said alliance troops had forced a Taliban retreat back to Saizhan resulting in the deaths of 22 Taliban. More than 20 were taken prisoner.

'Their attack from Behsud was unsuccessful from the beginning. Fighting is on in Behsud. In Khanabad, we have fighting. We captured Dawre Khanabad and a power plant at Band-i-Barq,' he said.

Khanabad is a district in northern Kunduz province which links Kunduz to Takhar, where the alliance holds an extensive support network.

Opposition agrees to truce for polio vaccination

KABUL (AFP) - Afghanistan's opposition northern alliance Saturday said it agreed in principle to a proposed ceasefire which would allow the United Nations to undertake a polio vaccination project.

He said an agreement was struck with the UN to allow inoculations to begin on all Afghan children under the age of five and to take place in

two phases on May 9-11 and June 1-3. 'If they ask us, in principle we agree because this is a humane issue,' Abdullah said.

'We will do our best, people's health is their natural right'.

The northern alliance is battling the hardline Islamic Taliban militia, which controls more than 80 percent of the country.

Taliban, Wahdat forces clash in Bamiyan mountains

KABUL: Afghanistan's warring sides kept up fighting in the mountains of Hazarajat on Monday as independent sources on Monday confirmed the ruling Taliban had captured Bamiyan city.

One western source said the militia had entered the city and forced the Northern Sunday

and Afghan city around the said the to retreat into the Hazarajat mountains into the Northern Alliance

the city," he told AFP. "The surrounding in the heartland of Bamiyan, Hazzaras, defied most expectations after Hezb-i-Wahdat troops

pushed the Taliban out of the city on April 21. —AFP

11 MAY 1999

No. 107 -- May 1999

Afghanistan News Bulletin

Prepared Monthly by Afghanistan News Clipping Services



THE AFGHAN CHARACTER



Price: Pakistan Rs. 400 : US\$ 20 -- (Abroad US\$ 30)

Afghanistan News Bulletin

No. 107 May 1989

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Afghanistan News Bulletin
Published monthly by Afghanistan
News Clipping Services (ANCS),
Peshawar, Pakistan.
c/o Tel: # (0521) 841083
Founder: Fawad Ahmad Azizi
Compiler: Tawfiq Ahmad Azizi

PRICE

Pakistan: Pak Rs.400.00 US\$20.00
Abroad: US\$ 30.00